A GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY COMMENCES IN THIS NUMBER

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 362. FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 7TH, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 362.] For the Week ending December 7th, 1895. [ONE PENNY.

A PIECE OF GOLD.

THERE are times in all circles of story-tellers when a spirit of reverie seems to come upon everyone. Thus it was when the learned judge of the court, sitting with his friends, had related an instance of one who, through trying to defraud a sister of a share in the father's property, outwitted himself and came to a miserable end.

For several moments no one spoke:

At last the lawyer.

"Gold is worse than an enchanter; it is a demon. As you said, judge, men will sell their very souls for its possession. If any one of us could be given the power of seeing all the passions and motives of men laid bare, it would drive him crazy in a day. If what men conceal could be opened to the light, how men would recoil from their own doings! It is only by concealment that the petty, the mean, the dishonest can be satisfied with themselves."

"Very true," said the judge, still inclined to be silent.

Another spell of musing was broken by the lawyer.

"I once had a queer experience in my own practice; in fact, as odd a case as I ever knew."

"You've had a busy life, Tom, in New York, and you know that is called the devil's headquarters," said the judge. "If you know the worst that ever happened there it will be something pretty bad."

"True," said the other, "it would be bad enough. But what this is you must judge for yourselves after I have told it. It serves to show what an all-absorbing passion the desire for wealth is. When we speak of gold usually in this connection, we use the term figuratively, meaning anything which may be the object of greed. In my story there was literal gold that had to do with it, and was, in fact, the most curious part of it.

"One of my first clients in New York was a wealthy, retired merchant, named Bertrand. He lived very simply, alone except for his housekeeper, in a retired, but very respectable, part of the city. He had a nephew, Frank Bertrand, a brother's son, whom he regarded as a scapegrace, and with whom he was not at all on good terms.

"Frank seemed to me to be a modest, sensible sort of a fellow, and I wondered at the old man's feeling towards him, when he was the only relative he had in the world. My curiosity aroused, I pondered the matter somewhat, and came to the conclusion that the fault was the old man's, not Frank's. He was rather high-spirited and wilful about making his own way in the world and doing as he pleased with himself, instead of allowing his rich uncle to dictate what he should do. This seemed to be the extent of his offence, so far as I could learn.

"The old man was testy and choleric, and childish about having his own way—a family trait, I guess—and not only forbade the nephew the house, but required me to make his will, cutting Frank off with only a very insignificant sum. All the rest of his large property he gave to his housekeeper, because, as he said, she had been kind to him, and would care for him as long as he lived.

"I talked with Frank about this disposition of the property and advised him not to throw away such a chance, but to attempt a reconciliation with his uncle, so he might change his will. The young fellow was obdurate and would promise nothing. He was an artist, and his whole soul was in his work. This his uncle detested more than all else as a species of vagabondism he could never tolerate. No reconciliation was possible while this remained, and I could not help admiring the boy's energy and spirit when he declared he would not give up his profession for all the fortunes in New York.

"He said he bore no ill will against his uncle, his property was his own to do with as he pleased; he spoke pleasantly of his uncle's peculiar notions, his temper and his weaknesses, and mentioned the housekeeper kindly, as one who had treated him well. As he left my office I said to myself: 'Well, Frank Bertrand, you deserve a fortune if you don't get one. A man has reason to be proud of such a nephew as you.'

"Not a month after that interview word was brought me that Mr. Bertrand had been found murdered in his library. I summoned the best detective I knew of, and hastened to the spot. An entrance had been made through the ordinary passages of the house, as there

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was no breakage. The victim had been struck from behind as he sat in his chair. The instrument used was a heavy one; the skull had been crushed, and death was instantaneous. At first we thought not a thing in the room had been touched, but the housekeeper called my attention to the fact that a nugget of gold which remained attached to a piece of its quartz matrix, the single geological specimen and curio which adorned the library, was missing, as well as the little velvet-lined box in which it had rested. Everything else was in its usual place as if nothing had happened there. This was our only clue, and to my astonishment and dismay it speedily led to the arrest of Frank Bertrand as the murderer.

"I had formed so good an opinion of the boy, and his manliness seemed so certain, that I found it hard to believe that he was even accused of murdering his uncle. That he was guilty was to my mind beyond the bounds of probability. I resolutely put that down for a fact. It being learned that he was seen in the vicinity of the house at the time of the murder, the detective went to his room to interview him as to his knowledge of the affair, and found him standing in the middle of the apartment in a state of excitement, and holding in his hand that same tell-tale nugget of gold.

So absorbed was he in it that he did not notice the quiet approach of the officer until he was close upon him. Then he made a movement as if to hide the secret. It was a perfect case of circumstantial evidence against him. Being arrested he impetuously defied his accusers, and would have resorted to violence against them had I not appeared on the scene and bade him desist. Seeing me he burst into a flood of tears.

"I demanded a further investigation of the case, but the detective informed me that it would be useless to look further for the murderer, and evidently looked upon me as somewhat out of my head for asking such a thing. From that moment I became my own detective.

"Of course my first move was to secure a calm, rational interview with Frank. This was in his cell. I will not repeat his indignant declarations of innocence, nor his pitiful appeal to me not to believe it of him. How came he by that piece of gold, and why was he at his uncle's house? Those were the questions to be answered.

"'I can answer the last easy enough,' he replied, 'but about the nugget I know no more than you.'

"'You were taken with it in your hands,' I said.

"'I know it; I had just taken it from my pocket.'

"'How came it in your pocket?'

"'I don't know.'

"'Well, that's singular, to say the least,' said I. 'Now, how came you there?'

"'Mrs. Bland called and said my uncle wanted to see me. I went, of course.'

"Mrs. Bland was the housekeeper. I thought I had struck a fact that would help us, and whistled softly. 'Did you see her when you got there?' I asked.

"'I saw no one there,' Frank replied. 'My ring was not answered. I tried the door and it was fast. I did not want to disappoint him after he had kindly sent for me, so I attempted to go in the back way as I had done before, but I found that fast also. Then, as I could arouse no one, I turned and came away. When I got back in my room somewhat nonplussed at not being admitted after my uncle had sent for me, I happened to put my hand in my pocket, and found there the nugget. I knew it was my uncle's for I had often seen it there, and how it came to be in my pocket was a mystery that excited me somewhat. It seemed like witchcraft.'

"I did not doubt the truth of Frank's story in the least. 'Someone put it in your pocket to throw suspicion on you; but how, and when, and where? Did Mrs. Bland come close to you when she came to say your uncle wished to see you?'

"'No, she did not come in. She left word at the door. But from my window I saw her go by. I'm sure it was her, but she could not have put the nugget in my pocket.'

"I may as well say here that the housekeeper had been cross-examined, and was conclusively proved to be elsewhere when the murder occurred. 'Was she an accomplice?' was the question I was pondering. A thought occurred to me. 'Did you find in your pocket the little velvet-lined box that held the nugget?' I asked.

"'No, there was nothing but the piece of gold, that I saw,' Frank replied.

"I went straight to Frank's lodgings and made a careful search. I searched the Bertrand mansion for the missing box, but found nothing.

"Mrs. Bland seemed very much distressed over what had happened, and was much concerned for Frank. She declared she didn't believe a word of the story that he was guilty. She said his uncle called to her from his room, as he often did, and directed her to call Frank. As she was going to a neighbour's she stopped on the way for the errand. She locked the house behind her on leaving, as was her custom, and found it locked on her return. She did not see Mr. Bertrand when he spoke to her; only heard his voice.

"I then went to my office and shut myself into my private room to quietly analyse the situation. Who, besides his housekeeper, had a motive for murdering Mr. Bertrand? I pondered the question over and over again. That there was an answer to it I was sure. But who had that motive? That once settled in my own mind, I would look further for the little box. I could easily see how Frank Bertrand had a strong existing motive to keep his uncle alive until he should make a different will. In his death he lost all hope. Only sudden anger under strong provocation could have moved him to the deed. But he was already out of my suspicion.

"I am a great believer in *motive* as the lever that moves human beings in the commission of all deliberate crimes. That it was not mere robbery in this case was evident, since only the nugget of gold was taken, and that I attributed to a momentary fancy rather than to any previous intention. It could not be hatred, for the old man had not an enemy in the world that we could discover. It must, then, be greed of some sort, some advantage to be gained through Mr. Bertrand's death.

"Here was another dilemma. His housekeeper was to have all the property, and she could not have committed the murder. It must then be somebody reaching further, somebody hoping for gain through her. But the old woman had not a relative in the world that I had ever heard of. She had lived very many years in the family, and I thought her relatives would have been heard from, if there were any greedy enough to commit murder in order to give her property which they might not get after all. Had she a lover?

"The thought struck me with such a sense of its affording a solution of the mystery, that it was like an electric shock. She would not marry while Mr. Bertrand

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lived; his death would make her free, and besides would make her wealthy, two great points to be gained, which might have a strong influence on a weak-minded man. I was sure also from the taking of the nugget, that whoever he was he would be found to have been a miner or a collector of ores or minerals. Full of my new idea, I started out to investigate.

"I had great faith in Mrs. Bland's honesty in the matter, but I did not think it prudent to go to her now for information, for I had not proved her integrity as I had Frank's, and she might, if an accomplice, give a warning that would defeat my purpose. I went to the few persons she was intimate with, and made cautious inquiries about her gentleman friends. It is almost needless to say I found one.

"He was a tall, gaunt fellow, and swarthy, like those who have been exposed to the sunlight. He had been a miner in Australia. Mrs. Bland had confided to a female friend that the man proposed but she refused him 'because she could not leave Mr. Bertrand.' I now decided to go straight to Mrs. Bland and ask if this man knew of the contents of the will. Tears came into her eyes as she admitted that he did. She had inclined to favour his proposal, and had agreed to marry him after Mr. Bertrand's death.

"I found where the man had his lodging, and taking an officer, made all haste there. His room was shabby enough, but, ah! there were the minerals, as I had surmised. We arrested him as the murderer of Henry Bertrand, and, after some search among his rather mixed belongings, found there the box with the velvet lining.

"When that was brought forth, his defiant manner fell away from him, and he begged for mercy like a child. He confessed all, even to brushing against Frank Bertrand on his way home to slip the nugget into his pocket. At the time of the murder he caught sight of the gold lump, and was suddenly possessed of a singular fancy for it, as it was such as he had long searched for in the mines. Realising later how dangerous was its possession, he disposed of it to throw suspicion upon Frank. All my theories were thus curiously verified."

The lawyer paused, apparently at the end of his story. There was one present who had the general appearance of a detective, who had been carefully following his narrative. He asked:

"Pardon two questions, sir. How came the murderer in the house without the housekeeper's knowledge, and who was it sent for the nephew?"

"I was going to tell you that presently," said the narrator. "The fellow explained that he had been determined for some time to get Mr. Bertrand out of the way, as that meant for him both a wife and a fortune. He had been waiting for an opportunity. Going to the house that day, he found the door unfastened and slipped in and concealed himself. He heard the old man give directions to have Frank called, and heard Mrs. Bland say she was going to stop awhile with a friend. Fortune was favouring his plans. Not only that but the fear came that Bertrand was relenting towards his nephew and might spoil all his hopes unless speedily dispatched. Frank Bertrand would be brought to the house just in time to be accused of the deed. It was the propitious time.

"The blow fell, the old man passed to his reward, and he fled. To his annoyance, the door locked with a spring behind him, and Frank, whom he was watching as he came, could not get in. Then came the thought to fasten the crime on him more securely by putting the nugget in his pocket.

"It has been truly said that men committing great crimes always do some act or leave some act undone, despite all their precautions, that tells the tale of their wrong doing. So this man, who seemingly had all his plans perfect, in his eagerness and excitement, forgot to put on Frank's person the box as well as its contents, and now it rose up a conclusive witness against him."

"Now I've got a question," ventured another listener. "What did the old lady do with the property? Did she hunt up another husband, or, give it to an asylum?"

"Neither. She was really a good woman, and was struck with horror at the villainy of the man who wanted to marry her for her prospective money. I think that every day, for she is still living, she feels thankful that she escaped the fate of marrying him. She turned the whole property over to Frank, saying she had no doubt his uncle would have relented towards him if he had lived. She lives with him, making a home for him like a mother, and they think a great deal of each other. The piece of gold and the velvet box which played so important a part in the tragedy of their lives, still rest in their old place in the library."

JAMES VAUGHN.

PEARSON'S * MAGAZINE.

Price Sixpence.

200,000 Copies of the First Number will be Published on

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12.

CONTENTS.

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GOLDEN STAR

A ROMANCE

BY GEORGE GRIFFITH.

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Valdar the Oft-Born," "The Outlaws of the Air," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN THE HOUSE OF THE INCAS.

FRANCIS HARTNESS and I came last out of the passage, and I asked him to lead the soldiers out of the hollow and across the plain to the wall of Sascahuaman, where I would join them, and as soon as they had gone out of the hollow and were lost to sight, I went to the hole among the bushes where the hidden stone was and released the chain and let the water flow back into its old place till the entrance to the Hall of Gold was only the same dark stagnant pool that any wanderer might find at the bottom of the cloven stairway.

Then the earth was strewn over the hole, and the stones and brushwood were piled round and over it as before, and we went away to join the others. We found them standing in a group in one of the angles of the great fortress, and there I spoke to the soldiers again, and told them how much depended both for themselves and for the country on their fidelity, promising them peace and prosperity and freedom if they were faithful, and a speedy death if they betrayed me.

She came to me and laid her hand on my arm.

After this I told them what story they should tell when they went back to the city: How their Indian guide had led them into the entrance to a cavern in the mountain, their officer going first, and he following, and how, when these two were going on with a single light, some two or three yards ahead of them a great slab of stone had suddenly fallen down between them, closing the passage, and how water had risen up and filled the passage at its lower end, so forcing them to run back out of it for fear of being drowned, and I further gave them permission to bring any who disbelieved them to the mouth of the cleft under the Sayacusca and show them the water that they would find there, but to take good care to send me warning of anyone going there.

This they promised to do, and still full of wonder and yet pleased with the gold they had got, and the promises I had made to them, they made a loyal farewell, and marched down through the Gate of Sand, and went back to the city to tell their story, and do the work that I had bidden them do.

When they had gone I sent some of my men to see that none of them turned back, and dismissed the rest to their homes, saving only Tupac, Anahuac, and Ainu, and three others who could be trusted with all things; and with these we went back into the underground chambers of the fortress by the way that we had left them.

When we got back to the throne-room I sent all but Tupac away to remove the beasts from the stables and take them to the hacienda so that the next night under cover of the darkness they could return and bring us food and drink and clothing and other things that we needed, for now that matters had gone so far it would not be safe for us to live at the hacienda or be seen in any place known to the Spaniards until the time was ripe for the striking of the first blow.

When they were gone we ate and drank a little of what we had brought with us in the morning, and then lay down, either to sleep or to think of the strange things that had happened and of what was now quickly coming to pass.

As for me, no sleep came to my eyes, for I knew that when Joyful Star awoke I should have to tell her at least something of what her brother had done and of what had happened to him, and a grievous task it was you may be sure when I came to the doing of it, as I did not many hours afterwards.

The first thing she asked me when she found that Djama was not with us was what had become of him, and then, knowing that sooner or later the bitter truth had to be told, I told her as gently as I was able, and hiding from her all that I could without lying to her. My words struck her dumb with horror and amazement, and if it had not been that Francis Hartness and the Professor were there, and told her that they had seen and heard with their own eyes and ears the truth of all that I said, I do not think she would have believed me. But when at last she could no longer doubt the story of her brother's crime and treachery, she came to me and laid her hand upon my arm, and looked up at me with tearful eyes and said:

"But you will not kill him, Vilcaroya, for my sake, will you? He is my brother, you know, after all, though he has made me almost ashamed to say so. You must protect yourself, of course, and your people from treachery, but you will not kill him, will you?"

"He is alive now," I said, "because he is Joyful Star's brother, not because I think he is worthy to live, for he would have betrayed one life that he gave back, and stained the other with infamy. But I have given my word, and he shall live, and when he can do no more harm I will pardon him, and he shall go back to his own country in safety. More than that I cannot promise even to you."

"It is all that I can expect," she said, "and more than he could expect after what he has done. But, oh! why should he have brought such a shame as this upon us?"

"Upon himself only," I said. "It would not be possible for such a thing as shame to touch you."

She looked up at me again and smiled through her tears as if my words had pleased her well, and that smile of hers was more to me than even her tears. Then she went back to the little chamber where she had slept, and presently returned leading Golden Star by the hand, and then we all sat down in the silver seats and talked of the wonderful things that had happened, and I told Golden Star all the story of my own return to life and hers, and what I knew of the changes that had happened in the world since she and I had said our last words to each other in the Sanctuary of

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the Sun; and then I set her talking with the others, translating for her and for them as well as I could, and she, knowing nothing of what had happened in the night and being glad that Evil Eyes, as she called Djama in our own speech, had gone away for a long time, was as happy as a child amongst us, and soon even Ruth became more cheerful and began to try and make her say words of English and repeat her name and the Professor's and Francis Hartness' after her, for she already loved her dearly, and, even in the midst of her own sorrow, she was rejoiced that the soul which had slept had been so happily reawakened in her.

After this Francis Hartness and I began to talk our plans over again and to discuss the chances of the revolt in Cuzco, and I showed him how, with the help of my people, I would the next day cut off all communication between the valley and the rest of the country until our work was finished there, for I was determined that the first part of the empire of my father's that I would re-take should be the City of the Sun itself and the region that it commanded, since I knew that my people still looked upon it as the most sacred spot on earth and would fight better to take it than any other place. And in this plan Francis Hartness, looking at the matter as a soldier, also agreed with me.

We thought it best that none of us should show ourselves in the open that day, for we knew not what the effect of the soldiers' story and their return without their officer might be in Cuzco, for if it had become widely known it would certainly bring many people up to the Rodadero to behold the scene of so strange an occurrence. So we spent the

And soon they came back to us into the throne-room clad exactly alike

day in conversation, and, which was more interesting to my companions, in exploring the maze of chambers and passages and winding galleries which the labour of many thousands of men had wrought out of the solid rock in the days of my ancestors, for you must know that in those days the fortress of the Sascahuaman was crowned with a great palace, which was the strongest place in all the Land of the Four Regions, and so here were stored very great treasures, not only of gold and silver and precious stones, but also weapons and armour and most finely-woven cloths of the purest wool of the Vicuña, which is softer than silk, brilliantly dyed and embroidered with gems and threads of gold, and the Imperial robes that had been worn by twenty generations of Incas, many sets for each, since nothing that had belonged to one Inca might ever be used by another after his death.

I stooped and kissed her brow.

Among these we found many sets of the royal robes of the Coyas, or queen-wives of the Incas, and I took Golden Star aside and told her to take two of these and to clothe herself in one and Joyful Star in the other, so that we might see our two Inca princesses side by side as they might have looked in the days of the past, and she fell in with my humour, laughing and clapping her hands like a delighted child.

So she took the robes and led Joyful Star away with her to their own chamber, talking to her in her soft, musical speech, though she knew she could not understand her, and yet making so many pr y signs and eloquent gestures that Ruth, forgetting her sorrow for the time, comprehended her and entered into the spirit of the play, and soon they came back to us into the throne-room clad exactly alike, and so perfectly resembling each other, save for the contrast of the blue eyes and the brown and the bright hair and the dark, that they could have been taken for nothing save twin daughters of the Sun and the fairest of his children; and Tupac and the two men that I had kept in the fortress to attend to our wants fell on their knees before them as they passed, as though they would have worshipped them.

It was at this time and while we were passing the hours in this fashion that Golden Star did something that gave me great joy and a bright hope for the future. I had been telling her of the wonderful country that I had returned to life in, and of the marvellous things that I had seen there, and this, she knew already, was the country of Francis Hartness. So, as he came from such a wonderful land, she thought, in the innocence of her old-world simplicity, that he was one of a new race of beings that had been born on earth since our days, and when I told her that he was but human like ourselves, though very strong and learned, and skilled in many things that we knew nothing of, she said to me, just as a sister might say to a brother from whom she had no secrets:

"He is rather, in my eyes, like a son of our Father who has come to earth from the Mansions of the Sun; yet I am very glad that he is not, and that he is a man such as you are, my brother, and when Joyful Star has taught me the speech of her people I will talk with him, and then I think life will be better for me, for even now, though I cannot understand his words, his voice sounds like music to me, and when he looks at me he makes me try to remember something that was in my other life, and I have forgotten. What is it, I wonder?"

I looked down into her eyes and saw the untroubled serenity of her soul reflected in them. There was no flush on her cheeks, and her lips were smiling as they could not have smiled had she known how I could have answered that question for her. I stooped and kissed her brow, and said:

"I might guess what it is, Golden Star, but I could not

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tell you. Yet I pray that our Father of the Sun may put it into the heart of my friend to teach you what I see now you can only learn from him."

More than this I would not tell her, though she questioned me sharply. But the next time that Francis Hartness spoke to her, through my lips, she looked up at him, and a little flush came to her cheeks, and a smile to her lips, and I saw his eyes brighten, and the colour deepen ever so little in his bronzed cheeks.

I had disguised him as well as I could to make him look like an Indian.

Then I looked at Joyful Star, and saw something shining in her eyes, too, and as she caught my glance she smiled ever so little, and said, when I had finished speaking for him:

"Vilcaroya is an excellent interpreter, I've no doubt, but don't you think, Captain Hartness, it would be very much more interesting if you could talk directly with Her Highness? You know I'm teaching Golden Star English, and Vilcaroya is teaching you Quichua—now I wonder which of you will be able to talk to the other first?"

He pulled his moustache and laughed, looking at Golden Star the while, and said:

"Well, Her Highness has the advantage of the easier language and the freshest, and I dare say the brightest intellect, but probably, for all that, we shall begin with some delightful jargon of both languages, and leave them to sort themselves out as we go on. Still, as you say, it will be more interesting than talking through an interpreter."

"And I hope," she said, with more meaning in her voice than in her words, "that you will both of you find it as pleasant as interesting."

"Who knows!" he said, catching her meaning and laughing again. "She is most wonderfully like you, Miss Ruth, isn't she?"

"Yes, but—but I am not without hope that you may some day compare us a little, just a little to my disadvantage."

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Night before the Day.

What Francis Hartness would have said to this I cannot say, though I do not think he was displeased by Joyful Star's words, and yet his face grew very serious as she spoke. But just then Tupac came and told me that Anahuac and Ainu had returned with the beasts, and were now waiting outside the bronze doors. From this we learnt that it was already night, though, truth to tell, the time had passed so quickly for us that I for one thought that it was little more than late afternoon.

Now, as I have said, I was the only one who knew the secret of the bronze doors, and so I went back with Tupac and opened them, and, when the men had entered, closed them again.

There were twelve of them beside Ainu and Anahuac, and all were laden with food and drink and clothing, and our arms and ammunition, two repeating rifles and two revolvers for each of us. When the men had laid their burdens down, I called Anahuac to me, and asked him if he had any news. He bowed himself before me, and then, standing in front of me as I sat in one of the seats, he said:

"Yes, lord. If the ears of the Son of the Sun are open, his servant will fill them with tidings of some moment."

"Say on," I said, "and meanwhile let a meal be prepared for us, for we are hungry."

This I said to Tupac, and Golden Star, hearing it, smiled, and took Ruth's hand and led her to the boxes, making signs that they should perform the housewife's duties together. Then Anahuac began, and said:

"The ears of the Children of the Blood have not been closed, nor have their eyes slept throughout the Holy City and the Valley of the Sun, and they have seen and heard much, and the courage of their hearts has risen high, and they are longing for the word of their Lord to break the yoke that is upon their necks.

"When the soldiers returned last night and told the story that my Lord had put into their mouths, there was great wonder among all the soldiers, and many saw in it a sign that the Son of the Sun is powerful, and can do that which he promises. But among the masters who are set over the soldiers there was great anger, and they sought, but without avail, to keep the news from being made public in the city; but the Men of the Blood took care that this should not be so, and to-day all Cuzco has been talking of the strange fate of the Coronel Prada, the son of Don Antonio Prada, the Governor. But Don Antonio himself had gone the day before to a hacienda near Oropesa, and messengers have been sent to him to tell him the story, and this evening he rode back with all haste to the city.

"He has ordered that to-night sentries shall be posted at all the approaches to the Rodadero and round the Sayacusca, so that none may come or go without his knowledge, and to-morrow he will come himself with many officers and two hundred soldiers and the thing they call dynamite, that he may rend the Sayacusca in pieces, and find, as he thinks, the place where his son has been hidden."

"And the soldiers, what of them?" I asked. "Will they be for us or against us?"

"There will be many in the service of my Lord, and if it shall be possible there shall be more of these than of the others, for those who were in the Hall of Gold last night have been busy, in the hope of my Lord's further bounty, and many have been tempted with the promise of gold and freedom; but still there will be many that may not be trusted, and all the officers of the Governor will be Spaniards."

"And therefore enemies," I said, when he had finished his story, and stood waiting for me to speak.

I told Francis Hartness at once what Anahuac had said, and we debated for a short time on what we should do. Then I called Tupac, and he came and stood beside Anahuac, and I said to them:

"These things have happened well for us, and now we must act quickly, so that we may take the best advantage of them. When you go hence, take with you twenty strips of the scarlet fringe in token of my authority, and give these to twenty of the best of the Men of the Blood, and let them go with all speed and silence through the towns and villages of the valley, and say that the Son of the Sun has come, and is about to stretch forth his hand and take that which was his again. Further, let every entrance to the valley be closed. Let the bridge over the Great Speaker be cut with all speed that may be. Let none pass in or out of the gateway of Piquillacta, and let all the mountain paths be broken down or blocked, so that none may know what is happening in the valley, nor any news be carried hence into the country.

"Let every hacienda, whose master is a Spaniard, be given to the flames, but let no one else be injured. Let none of the strangers be hurt, and let their goods be sacred. Let all of the sentries who will not serve us be disarmed or slain silently by the others, and this before midnight, and let those who are with us who shall come with the Governor to-morrow make ready to do quickly that which shall be commanded them. The password for those who are with us will be 'Vilcaroya.' The rest I will do with my own hands and the help of my friend. I have spoken, let me be obeyed quickly!"

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Then they bent low before me and went to make ready to do what I had bidden them.

It was then about eight o'clock at night, and after we had had our evening meal we waited until it was nearly eleven, making perfect our plans, and then, when Ruth and Golden Star had gone to rest without knowing of the work which we had in hand—for we had kept it from them lest they should be anxious for us—Francis Hartness and I armed ourselves, after I had disguised him as well as I could to make him look like an Indian, and we said good-night to the Professor and left the fortress by the same way that we had left it the night before.

As soon as we got out into the open air we made our way stealthily back towards the Rodadero, until I caught sight of a sentry standing near one of the carved stones.

"I will go and see whether that is a friend or a foe," I whispered. "You wait here and cover him with your rifle, but do not fire unless you hear me whistle."

"Very well," he said; "but take care of yourself, for those Mannlicher bullets make a very ugly wound."

I waved my hand to him in reply, and went away towards the sentry, keeping a good look out for others who might be about. I had in my belt a long, heavy-bladed knife, and this I loosened in the sheath as I came near to him. I got within earshot of him unseen, and then, rising to my feet behind him, I said in a low voice, but loud enough for him to hear:

"Vilcaroya—friend or foe?"

"*Halta! quien va?*"

The words in the hated Spanish speech told me that he was a foe. As he faced about, bringing his rifle to the ready, I drew my knife, and before he could take aim, sent it whistling through the air with such force and so true an aim, that it took him in the windpipe and half buried its blade in his neck. That was one of the tricks of our old warfare which, with many others, I had taken good care not to forget.

He dropped his rifle and clasped his hands to his throat and fell without a sound. I crept swiftly forward, pulled the knife out of his throat and drove it into his heart. Then I quickly took off his cartridge belt and long coat and cap, and put them on. Then I took his rifle and stood in his place for a little while, so that the others might see me, and then walked back to where I had left Hartness. When he saw me coming, his rifle-barrel moved till it covered me, and he said in English:

He dropped his rifle and clasped his hands to his throat.

"Is that you, Vilcaroya?"

"Yes," I said. "The sentry was an enemy, and I have killed him. Now I am going to take you prisoner, as though I were the sentry, and so we can go together and find the officer who commands the sentries, and take him prisoner or kill him."

"All right," he said with a laugh. "I surrender. This isn't quite what we call civilised warfare, but I suppose it can't be helped."

We went back together to the place where the sentry that I had killed had stood, and then we saw two or three others coming in towards the place, no doubt to see why the other sentry should have left his post. I took Hartness' rifle out of his hand, and, catching him by the arm, led him to meet the nearest of them, as though I had taken a prisoner. Within ten paces of them I halted, and said:

"Is it Vilcaroya or Prada?"

"Vilcaroya to a friend, Prada to an enemy," he answered in the dialect in which I had addressed him.

"Then we are friends?" I said, taking off the peaked cap that had belonged to the other sentry, and showing him the long straight brown hair that betokened my race. "I am he who has come back from the days that are dead—Vilcaroya, the son of Huayni-Capac."

"And I am thy servant, Lord," he said, bringing his rifle butt down between his feet, and bending his head over the muzzle. "I am one of those who saw the glory of my Lord in the Hall of Gold last night."

"Then thou art one who can be trusted," I said, "for none have betrayed the secret or earned the swift death that would have been theirs had they done so. Now tell me how many of those who are on guard here to-night may be trusted."

"There are twenty of us, Lord, here, not counting the officer in command."

"Nay," I said, interrupting him, "there are but nineteen, for he who wore this coat and carried this rifle was an enemy, and I have killed him, as I would have killed thee hadst thou been an enemy. Now, of these nineteen, how many may I trust?"

"There are but five who may not be trusted, not counting the officer, and he is a Spaniard, and must be killed."

"That is good," I said, for the tone in which he had said these last words had pleased me well. "Now this man with me is my faithful friend, and one who will fight well for me and my people. Go on the other side of him, and we will take him as a prisoner to the officer. Then thou shalt see how Vilcaroya deals with his enemies."

He bent his head in assent, and took his place beside Hartness, and as we marched away Hartness said to me:

"I don't think I shall have much to teach you in strategy, Vilcaroya, but I must say that I would rather have a stand-up fight than this kind of thing."

"It is not like what you have told me of the warfare of the English," I said, "but here it is necessary, as you will see. Yet I will not ask you to shed blood as I shall shed it."

"Very well," he said, "if it has to be it must be. Let us get it over."

So we marched him between us across the plain, and when we got between the wall of the fortress and the carved stone that they called the Inca's Seat, we saw the officer who was in command of the sentries, walking with two soldiers beside him from post to post, seeing that the sentries were awake and keeping proper watch. We went to meet him, and halted ten paces from him at his command. I had told the sentry to reply for me, and he answered the officer's hail and said:

"Vilcaroya!—a prisoner."

As the first words left his lips the two soldiers repeated the password and made with their rifles the movement that is called the salute. My knife was already in my hand, and as the officer gave a command in Spanish, it flashed once in the starlight and the next instant was buried to the hilt in his breast. He fell, as the sentry had done, without a cry, for it had smitten him to the heart, dead, as though he had been struck by a lightning bolt. The others stared at his fallen body, dumb with amazement, and I heard Hartness utter a sound that might have been one either of horror or of wonder, but I had no time to take heed of this, so I instantly ordered the two soldiers to take the officer's uniform off his body, and then I said to Hartness:

"Now, you can speak Spanish, and I cannot. Take this Spaniard's uniform and his weapons, and make yourself the officer of the guard, and then you shall help me to set a trap that the Governor shall find it a hard matter to escape from."

(*To be continued.*)

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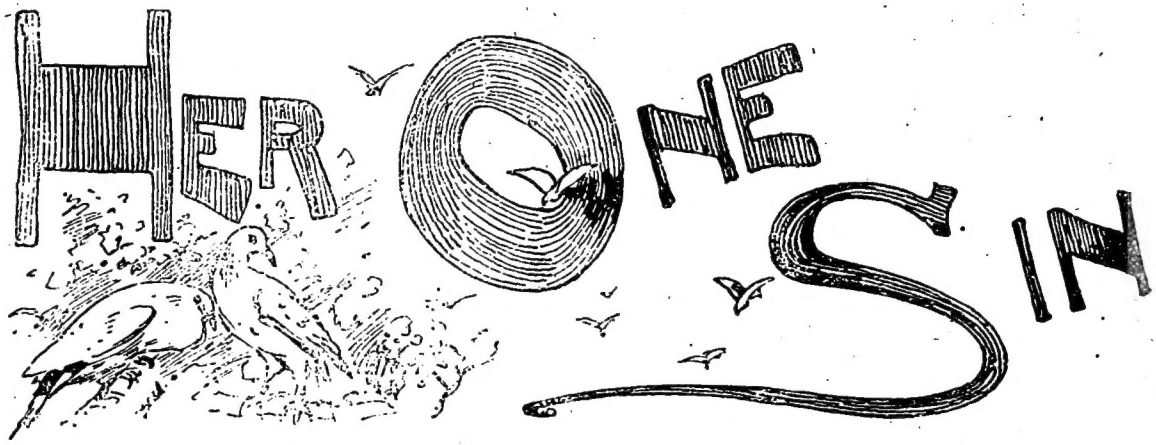

"POOR old chap, I knew what it would be if you went; I told you that you'd be bored to death with them, they are like a pair of turtle-doves."

I was speaking to my friend Alder, who in a moment of rashness had promised my cousin to visit him and his wife. They had just pulled through a spell of very black days indeed, and as matters righted themselves suddenly, they decided to renew the happy days of their honeymoon, much to the discomfiture of their friends and acquaintances.

"Yes, I suppose it was irksome," said Alder, dreamily turning with a sigh from the bay window, from which he had been watching the moonlight throwing wavering shadows on the snow.

"Yes, I suppose it was," he repeated; then suddenly: "but you told me that Dick forgot that appearances are often misleading, and that she could furnish no satisfactory explanation of her conduct, didn't you? Happily it has all ended well, however, but her voice and manners reminded me of a page in the life of a friend of mine. If the story would interest you, you shall have it after dinner."

"Most certainly it would," said I, for Alder's tales are always worth hearing. Accordingly, when we were sitting one on each side of the fire after dinner, he commenced:

"It is many years since it all happened, still I believe I remember the facts fairly well," then with a wan smile, "I cannot possibly do the story justice, and probably you will have guessed the sad end before I have reached it.

"My friend, whom we will call Carr, had been of material service to a man when out in India, and one day while out hunting this man met with a serious accident which in two or three days caused his death. His servant and Carr nursed him through his short illness, and then it was that the stranger gave him the unpleasant task of breaking the news of his death to his wife.

"Accordingly, upon Carr's return to England he fulfilled his mission. The widow was quite a young woman and very beautiful, and Carr became hopelessly fascinated by her charms. Her late husband had been a regular scoundrel, and their marriage had been anything but a success, so after the usual lapse of time she married Carr.

"The first three years of their married life was one long dream of happiness, so, like Tom and his wife, they may have been a bore to their friends.

"It was too good to last.

"Money and jewellery had been missing for the last few months, and at last Carr traced the theft to the butler, whom he instantly dismissed without a character. This measure was taken at the suggestion of my friend's wife.

"One night when Carr returned home from business he found his wife sitting at his desk in the library. She had opened it with a skeleton key, and in her hand she held a roll of banknotes.

"There she sat cowering like a whipped hound before its master, with guilt written on every feature of her face, shivering like a coward.

"Carr, anxious to find some excuse for his darling, tried to console himself with the thought that it was for some relative in distress; but no relative of hers was in want of money. No, it was only for herself. And yet had she not had everything she wanted, for nothing was ever denied her.

"Had she not permitted the servant to suffer in her stead he might have passed this over. As far as possible Carr made restitution to the man.

"In one way, and only one could he explain the matter, and that was that his wife was a kleptomaniac. Never before had he believed in kleptomania, but now, well, what could he do otherwise than believe—it was forced upon him. This horrible disease was ever before him, his mind became fixed on it. She even confessed that she had at times felt impelled to take valuables for which she could not possibly have any use.

"The discovery tortured him night and day. Had he not regarded his wife and child, and himself also as being of a finer type than most people? Now he was

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completely disillusioned. Now he dared not leave her for an instant, in case the evil desire might return. Pocketing his pride, he explained the true state of things to her maid, and together they watched her, never leaving her unattended for a minute.

"This in itself was a gross piece of cruelty—cruelty that must have cut her to the quick and hurt her pride most sorely. At that time Carr felt it his duty to act as judge and to see that his sentence was carried out to the word.

"If for one single moment she forgot her past sin, and turned to Carr for sympathy, sternly, very sternly did he rebuke her.

"No word of reproach or complaint did she utter, but drearily and sadly accepted the penalty of her crime.

She feared that he would send her from him, but when she found it part of his plan to keep constantly near her, she mutely obeyed his every word, and seemed content. Nor did she, or rather would she, for a single instant believe that Carr's love had been forfeited.

"She gave herself up altogether to the child, who was a constant source of anxiety and trouble to Carr. If the poor little one took a sweet or a cake that was not his, Carr, with his heated imagination, was seized with a terrible and overwhelming fear that he had inherited his mother's sin.

"One night, just as Carr was about to retire, his wife came in hurriedly and told him to send for a doctor as the child was ill. Carr left the room.

"All the ordinary remedies she tried without avail, and then raising her frightened, tear-stained eyes to him in mute appeal she lifted the child in her arms.

"At length he told her in a strained voice that he had not sent for the doctor as it was better for the child to die!

"Fool that he was; he did not think that he could err. He told himself that it was better to get it over than to have to go through that awful misery of seeing his son a thief.

"For a few moments the mother was nearly mad with grief and indignation; then, quietly placing the child in its bed, she watched the deathly, waxen pallor creep over his fair young face, and the little form, whose growth she had tended with such jealous care and love, grow stiff and cold and solemn in death. Then with one long-drawn cry she fell on her knees and sobbed as if her very heart were broken!"

It was two or three minutes before Alder spoke again, and when at last he raised his head he continued in a hard, hurried manner:

"The mother weakened visibly after the death of her child, and in this case the physicians *were* called in. There was no illness, simply a fading away, a growing weakness and a want of will to live. It was soon finished, and within two months of the boy's death the mother went to join her darling.

"The day after her death a note came for her addressed by a strange hand. Carr could hardly open it, for his mind would wander to that poor cold body upstairs. The letter was supposed to be from her first husband, whom Carr had helped to bury, and cautioned her that if his monthly allowance did not turn up, he would have to inform Carr of her double marriage. It was a pity he had not done so already, as Carr would have recognised him as the stranger's servant.

"The poor woman's sin was more than explained, and she had paid for it in full.

"Well, old man, you'd better be off to bed now; I will sit up for a bit and think; that is about all there is of the tale; I hope I haven't worried you with it."

Then I spoke for the first time.

"Is not Carr tired of life?"

"Yes, he is!" was the simple answer.

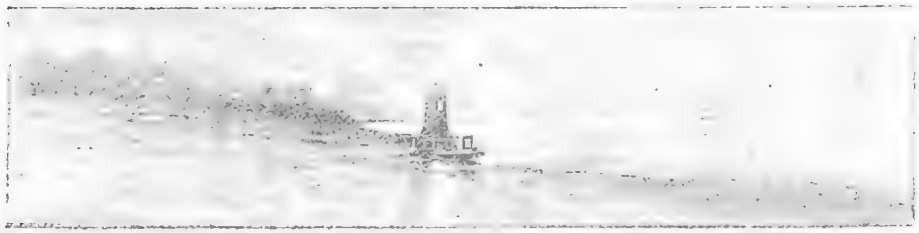
"Good-night." Then I left him.

That night I thought I heard him murmuring in his sleep. After a time I got up and listened.

"Aless darling, will you, can you forgive me? Yes—yes—she does. Her hands are held out to me——I——I come—Aless, I——"

I waited for half an hour, and then the suspense was too great; lighting a candle I crept through the door to his bedside, and there he lay with a happy smile on his face—dead.

M. Farnes.



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THE COMMUNIST'S FATE

"AND so Roblard is going back to France," remarked one of the circle of exiles who were discussing the amnesty at the Café du Nord of Geneva."

"He will never set foot on French territory again," responded another, with a shake of the head.

"But he has been pardoned," said the first speaker, taking up a copy of the *Journal Officiel*, and scoring a mark with his thumb under the name of Antoine Roblard.

"No matter," was the answer, given with more emphasis than before. "Roblard has been amnestied by the Government; but he must get pardoned by other persons before his exile can end; and the persons in question are not forgiving. If Roblard returned to France he would be murdered."

"What are you saying there?" chorused all the Communists round the table; but the speaker, a journalist named Vuilleux, finished his absinthe and took leave of the company with a wink, having vouchsafed no explanations. The next moment a slim, sallow, and careworn man entered the café with some books under his arm, and was demonstratively, almost affectionately, greeted by the men whom Vuilleux had just left. He was hailed by his name of Roblard, and congratulated upon his pardon. "Well, Antoine," cried one, "I suppose you will be leaving us in a day or two?"

"Yes," answered Roblard, "and glad I shall be to get back to Paris after eight years of absence."

"It is to Paris you are going, then?"

"Yes, to-morrow morning by the first train, so I shall wish you good-bye on leaving presently."

"Say to us '*Au revoir!*'" cried one of the Communists, lifting his glass. "May the day come when we shall meet in Paris and take our *revanche* of 1871!"

"*Au revoir!*" answered Roblard gravely, as he raised his glass of beer to his lips. He half emptied it, and then sat down and chatted for half-an-hour on the political topics of the day. He was known to be writing a "History of the Commune," and he remarked that he was glad his exile was going to end, chiefly because he wanted to have access again to the public libraries of Paris.

After this he expressed his opinions cheerily about Grévy, Waddington, and Gambetta; stated his belief that he—Roblard—should soon find a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, and that he would then pitch into the "Moderates." Finally he shook hands with every one of the exiles, saying a friendly word to each, and took his departure.

When he was gone a discussion arose between some who contended that there was an unusual look about Roblard, and others who maintained that they had found him just the same as ever. One of these latter, meeting Vuilleux, the journalist, later in the evening, said: "You were all wrong about Roblard; he is going back to France fast enough. He starts to-morrow."

"Ah!" exclaimed Vuilleux, with a slight arching of his eyebrows. "Then he will be a dead man before a month is over."

"You are alluding to some projected duel, I suppose?" rejoined the other. "Perhaps you mean to kill him yourself?"

"Roblard will not die in a duel," replied Vuilleux significantly, "but he *will* die within a month. You mark my words."

* * * * *

Twenty-four hours after this, just as dusk was gathering over Paris, and the policemen at the Préfecture de Police were lighting up that big establishment with gas, a cab, loaded with luggage, which had arrived from the Lyons railway station, drew up on the quay that skirts the Palace of Justice, and Antoine Roblard alighted from it.

He passed quickly under the archway which leads to the Préfecture, and entering the first open door in the office, asked if he could see Monsieur A——, mentioning one of the chiefs of the political department of the police. The inspector on duty took his card, and handed it to a messenger, who disappeared for a few minutes and then returned, begging Roblard to walk upstairs.

The pardoned Communist followed his guide, who conducted him up a broad flight of stairs thickly carpeted with cocoa-nut matting, and ushered him into an office, where a grey-haired functionary with a very firm mouth and a pair of keen eyes, whose brightness was concealed by *pince-nez*, sat writing.

Monsieur A. was a Republican, and he and Roblard had known each other intimately in old days when they had been fellow journalists together on an opposition paper which made a train at "ramming" at the Government journals. The police official did not affect to be unmindful of this bygone acquaintanceship, but held out his hand to the returned exile, saying: "I am glad to see you back Roblard; what can we do for you?"

"I want you to save my life," said Roblard, sitting down unbidden, and lowering his voice. "I am in danger of assassination."

"Explain the matter," replied Monsieur A., incredulously; and he narrowly watched the Communist's features. The pale face, dark, sparkling eyes, dry voice, and general feverishness of manner, were such as may be often seen in melancholic madmen, labouring under a fixed hallucination. Roblard noticed the glance

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that was fixed upon him, and caught the tone of doubt in his interlocutor's words; but he paid no heed to them.

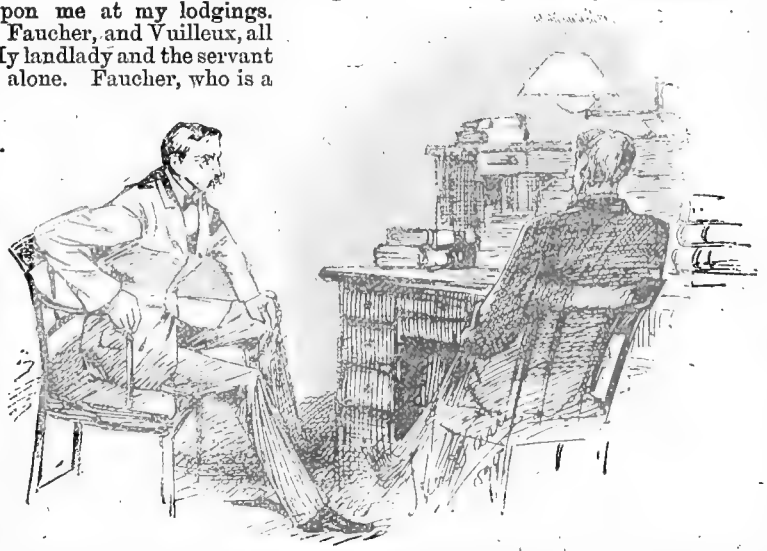
"You know what was the crime alleged against me?" he asked.

"Yes; you were sentenced to death for having instigated the shooting of the banker Y—— under the Commune. However, as you had escaped to London before Paris fell into the power of the Versaillists you were never arrested; and, on the whole, you have escaped pretty cheaply."

"Well," continued Roblard, speaking lower than before and looking Monsieur A. steadfastly in the face, "I have been accused of shooting Y——from motives of private malice, and for the purpose of robbing him."

"Who accused you—the prosecution?"

"No, our people—some of my fellow Communists," replied Roblard with a kind of gasp, which was meant to be one of indignation, but which sounded like fear. "I had been in London about a month, when one night three men called upon me at my lodgings. They were Dorrielle, Faucher, and Vuilleux, all three my enemies. My landlady and the servant were out, so I was all alone. Faucher, who is a kind of revolutionary fanatic, began to abuse me, saying I had brought disgrace on the Commune cause, and had been playing the game of the Bonapartists by shooting Y——, who knew all the ins and outs of the Mexican expedition, and held documents damaging to the Empire, which he would have published had he lived. Then Dorrielle spoke out, taxing me with having seized all Y——'s securities and valuables, and having appropriated them to my own use; just as if Y—— would have been silly enough to keep his money within reach of looters under such a *régime* as ours."



"To hang me with," rejoined Roblard hoarsely, as if the mere recollection of the affair strangled him.

"By the way, was it really you who had Y —— shot?" inquired the police official carelessly.

"That is beside the question," answered Roblard, on his guard. "All I can say is, that these three enemies of mine took it for granted I had done so, and when they had finished abusing me, Vuilleux pulled a rope out of his pocket."

"A rope! What was that for?"

"To hang me with," rejoined Roblard hoarsely, as if the mere recollection of the affair strangled him. "They announced that they had sentenced me to death, and that they would hang me out of hand. My death, said they, would look like a suicide. Well, they did hang me——"

"Come, come," expostulated Monsieur A——, doubtful whether the Communist was romancing or speaking from hallucination, yet bethinking himself that somehow the man might be telling the truth after all.

"They did hang me," repeated Roblard impressively. "It was all in vain that I struggled, screamed, and prayed for justice; I was forced on to my knees and a handkerchief was stuffed into my mouth. Then those three butchers passed a halter over my neck and strung me up to a curtain rod. I suppose, however, that they must have made off pretty fast, for less than a quarter of an hour afterwards (having lost consciousness in the meanwhile) I was cut down by my landlady and the servant, who had returned. Both these poor women concluded I had tried to make away with myself."

"Of course, though, you went and lodged a complaint with the police?"

"No; what would have been the use of it?" returned Roblard, with a shrug. "My enemies had taken their precaution so well that I should not have been believed, and the English magistrates would either have put me into a madhouse, or have sent me to prison for having tried to commit suicide, contrary to their laws. Besides, on the day after this affair I received an anonymous letter, enigmatically worded, but from which I gathered that, as I had escaped the halter, I should be allowed to live, provided I did not return to France. Dorrielle, Faucher, and Vuilleux condemned me to perpetual exile."

"Have you this letter with you?" asked Monsieur A——, who seemed more and more doubtful about Roblard's story.

"Yes, here it is," said the Communist, and he handed his interlocutor a strip of creased paper, on which the latter read:

"You have got luckily cured of your sore throat, but for such a delicate constitution as yours the climate of France will not do. Keep clear of the country for your own sake, or there will be a relapse."

"Humph!" muttered the police official. "And have you seen your enemies since the event you relate?"

"Yes; I have seen Vuilleux frequently at Geneva," replied Roblard, in agitation; "but there is the horror of the thing. Whenever I spoke to him of his attempt on me, he said he did not know what I meant, and hinted that I was a monomaniac. I half got to believe that I was so myself, and that prevented me from ever speaking on this subject to others."

Monsieur A—— rubbed his head. Roblard's narrative might be true or untrue; anyhow, it was expedient to have the man watched, in order to protect him from others if he were really in danger, or against himself if he were insane. After a few moments' reflection, the police official said: "Well, Roblard, I will lend you one of my detectives, who shall be your companion until you feel safe. He is quite a new man; nobody knows him, so that you will not be compromised if seen in his society."

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"Thank you, A——," said Roblard, with a sigh. "Fancy my needing the protection of the police! However, I will pay your man whatever is wanted; he must be absolutely at my disposal, like a servant."

"You have grown rich, then?" asked Monsieur A—— with a smile.

"No, but I make some money by my books," rejoined the Communist, colouring.

"So much the better," continued the official in the same vein of banter; then, suddenly changing his tone: "I say, Roblard, tell me the truth; what became of Y——'s papers, for they were never found."

"How can I tell?" queried Roblard, with a scowl. "I suppose you, too, will accuse me of having taken them. Do I look like a robber?"

"No; but now I come to think of it, you have been leading a pretty expensive life in your exile," replied Monsieur A—— pointedly. "You have travelled all over America and the Continent; you have been subscribing to so-called patriotic funds. We have even had to stop a gift of money which you had sent to some political convicts in New Caledonia. All that is pretty well for an author, eh?"

"Possibly. But authors are not beggars in these days," answered Roblard evasively. He was irritated, and Monsieur A—— did not think fit to pursue the subject. He left the room, and having rung for the detective about whom he had spoken to Roblard—a sleepy-looking, middle-aged man named Trouillot—gave that worthy his instructions. He wound up by whispering: "My own belief is that M. Roblard is mad, so that you will have to keep your eyes about you."

"Very good, sir," answered Trouillot laconically.

Roblard and Trouillot left the Préfecture together in a cab; and the Communist appeared to be in rather high spirits during their drive to an hotel. A load seemed to have been lifted from his mind, and he talked with excitement about the changes he had noticed in Paris, saying how glad he was to get back again. At the hotel he bespoke two bedrooms next each other, and having a door of communication; then he ordered dinner.

By this time his spirits had somewhat fallen, and he watched his companion through the corner of his eyes as if he did not quite like the look of him. Trouillot was one of those men who cannot talk, and whose faces do not say much in their favour. He kept on saying: "Yes, sir," stolidly; and during dinner ate and drank largely.

Nothing of consequence happened during the evening. Roblard was tired with his journey from Geneva, and after the pair had discussed a cup of coffee and a cigar in the smoking-room, he suggested bed. Both men repaired to their sleeping-chambers, and Roblard began by requesting that Trouillot would leave the door of communication between the two apartments open.

Trouillot consented, but he was rather dismayed when he saw the Communist prepare for his night's rest by laying on his night table a six-chambered revolver and a large clasp-knife. He vowed to himself that he would sleep as gendarmes are said to do—with one eye open; but this resolution was soon obliterated by drowsiness, the effects of the good dinner he had eaten. Ten minutes after getting between sheets, Trouillot was sound asleep, and snoring like a trombone.

He awoke in the middle of the night, and recollected where he was; but a peculiar odour was filling his nostrils. He sat up and rubbed his eyes. The room was pitch dark. He struck a match, and the first thing he saw after lighting his candle was a handkerchief (lying on his pillow), which had evidently been steeped in chloroform. The pungent smell of that poison still lingered about it.

This discovery at once drew Trouillot out of bed, and he strode trouserless into the next room, holding his candle at arm's length. At first he could see nothing unusual; but suddenly his eyes met a sight which made him stand stock still in the middle of the apartment. Deep in the alcove, and half hidden by its curtains, hung the lifeless body of Roblard, who was suspended by the neck to the curtain rod by means of the bell rope. He was quite dead; and the surprising part of the matter was that the door of his room opening on to the passage stood ajar!

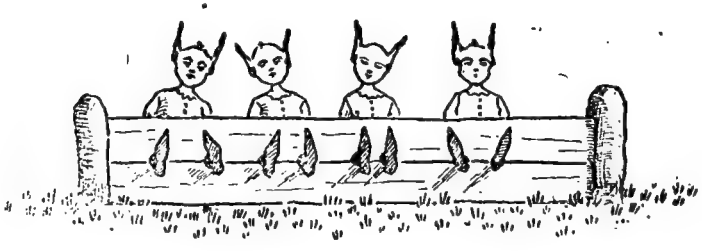
* * * * *

A few hours later, when a summary inquest had been held by the Procureur de la République, that functionary said: "It is obviously the suicide of a cunning madman."

"I suppose so," concurred Monsieur A——, who had been called in. "Yet those conspirators are queer fellows; they cannot even die plainly like other men."

The same evening Vuilleux, the journalist, reading the Parisian telegrams in a Geneva newspaper, remarked to a circle of affrighted Communists: "Didn't I tell you Roblard's days were numbered? He was bound to end in that fashion."

Le Vier.



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TAKING NO CHANCES.

THERE it lay. Right on the mountain top. Nature had hollowed out, as if on purpose, a space not more than fifty feet square; and in it she had placed gold in quantities that few men ever see and fewer still possess.

Amid the sand and in the crevices of the rocky ledges that made the apex of the mountain, a novice might have passed it by unheedingly. But when Jack Swilling and his comrades saw it they knew that they were rich, that in the gold that lay before them was a new life, wherein that gold would buy them the smiles and caresses of women, the homage and subservience of men—a life of music, of feasting, and of song.

It was for this that they had toiled for years, and had risked everything that men hold dear. And now it had come to them, unexpectedly and by accident. Attracted by the discovery of rich gold-diggings at Weaver, in the then recently organised territory of Arizona, the little party had left Tucson and travelled northward.

On their arrival at the mines, they found that already a good many thousands of dollars had been taken out, principally by Mexicans, and they had no difficulty in finding ground that paid them well. For nearly a month they had continued mining, meeting with no more than usual success, until one of their party, while hunting, had ascended one of the surrounding mountains.

On reaching the summit he had paused for an instant to let his eyes sweep the mesas and mountains that stretched away for miles on either side, and, while doing so, he had discovered that the little basin in which he stood was almost paved with gold. Picking up a few of the larger pieces, he returned to camp and informed his comrades of his discovery.

Picking up a few of the larger pieces.

The story he told his companions was one so incredible that, had it not been for the nuggets of gold which he had brought with him they would not have believed him. Early the next morning the entire party ascended the mountain, and what they saw proved that the richness of the find had not been exaggerated, but that its true value had been, if anything, under-estimated.

Abandoning their old place, the party encamped on their newly-discovered treasure-ground and began to gather its riches. At first every loose nugget was carefully picked up and stored away; after that the sand, which was found to be heavy with fine gold, was gathered together preparatory to "washing" it out with the waters of the stream below.

This done, they began with their bowie knives to "cut and gouge" out of the crevices and cracks of the rock the gold that they contained. Never did men work so hard. The feverish hunger and thirst was upon them. As long as the light of day lasted they continued to work. Each day saw the pile of virgin gold grow larger and larger, until it became impossible to conceal it.

The Mexicans, who had been their neighbours in the old diggings, would come into their camp and look with greedy eyes at the Americans at work. At first they sought everywhere to discover another such pocket, but in vain. Beyond the little piece of ground where the first party had "struck it," the mountain side was as barren of gold as a macadamised road. Then they ceased to prospect, and spent their time sullenly watching the taking out of the riches in which they were to have no share.

It was only when dusk glistened with its myriad of stars that they returned to their own camp, to toss restlessly through the night, feverishly anxious to see what new riches the morrow would bring. The gold their own work had taken from the banks of the stream, with which they were once so satisfied, seemed so little and insignificant when compared with what their neighbours had found on the mountain top, that they no longer thought or spoke of it. Once it had seemed to them like a fortune, now it was hardly worth having.

Day after day the Americans worked, watched by the Mexicans. From a few dollars the value of their gold grew into hundreds and then into thousands. They could not tell how much they had, for they had no means of weighing it. They had more than all of them together could carry. The strongest man amongst them, Jack Swilling, six feet and over, could not shift the gold from one place to another without making five separate loads of it.

As the store of gold grew, the friendship that had once existed between the Americans and the Mexicans

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became weaker and weaker. Soon they were enemies, watching one another with hatred that none attempted to disguise.

The Americans no longer slept together in a little group, as had been their custom. Instead, each took his blanket and went off alone, yet not so far but that he was near the gold. While at work during the day, they made it a point never to group together. Even when a nugget larger than the rest was picked up they no longer joyously called to each other that they might gather together to admire it. They were always on their guard, taking no chances. Day and night, one of their party watched the Mexicans.

Then they ceased to prospect and spent their time in sullenly watching.

Yet the Mexicans had said or done nothing to justify the suspicion that they would descend to murder and robbery to secure the gold. They did nothing but watch, watch, watch, day after day, as the store of gold increased. But, as the days went by and the pile of gold grew, a new look came into their faces, another light into their eyes. The lips were drawn a little tighter, the forehead was less open. There were no longer laughing efforts made to tell jokes, half in Spanish, half in English, to amuse one another. The old *camaraderie* was gone. Yet, less than a month before, these men had found pleasure in sharing their scanty stores with one another. Now they merely watched each other, and the pile of gold, with a hatred so intense as to be unspeakable.

The pile of gold, though, continued to grow. But at last it ceased. In the crevices, and cracks, and sand, there was no longer a single glitter of yellow. Only the scars remained, where the knifes had cut and gouged out the riches of the rock.

The Mexicans smiled with pleasure as they saw the Americans vainly endeavouring to find more of the metal, and in return the latter grew hot with anger, though, in their hearts, they felt relieved to know that they had exhausted the lead. Already they had as much as they could care for. Had there been more to mine, though, they would have taken it out rather than see anyone else possess it. It had grown to be a pleasure to have it, if only to know that it was theirs, even if they could not use it.

When the pocket was mined out, the Mexicans no longer came up daily to watch the Americans. Instead, they stayed in their camp at the foot of the mountain. They did no work. Why should they? What would the few ounces they could take from their claims amount to, compared with what the Americans had obtained?

Now that there was no longer any gold to mine, the Americans began to devise means to remove the gold they had to where they could dispose of it.

"We can't carry all of it, but we might take part and hide the rest until we could return for it," suggested one.

"Yes, and what we would leave behind the Mexicans would get before we were out of sight. Why don't they get up and go? This is a white man's country," said another.

"No, we can't do that," said Jack. "We will have to send to Wickenburg for a pack-train, and two of you will have to go for it. You can leave to-night, and the three of us who stay will guard the gold. Now, who will go is the question?"

No one answered. Instead, each looked at the other, as if wishing his neighbour would volunteer.

"There's no danger. What's the matter with you? Are you afraid to trust each other with the gold?" asked Jack.

No one replied, yet each knew that he did not want to go and leave the gold behind him. They were beginning to distrust each other as they distrusted the Mexicans.

"Well, we will draw lots, and the two who get stuck will have to go," said Jack.

The lots were drawn, and the two men to whom it had fallen to make the journey returned to camp and tried to sleep until night came. When it was so dark that they could not be seen, they rose, and, slipping out of camp, began their trip across the desert.

The next morning, one of the three men who remained behind, while watching, saw one of the Mexicans take his gun and start round the base of the mountain, as if to hunt. He called the attention of his two comrades to it. As the three watched the Mexican, they saw the latter suddenly stop and look intently at the ground, and then his face turned up in the direction of the

Occasionally they glanced towards the camp where the gold was.

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mountain-top, as if to discover whether he was observed. Apparently satisfied that he was not, he began to walk backwards and forwards, as if looking at foot tracks; then, as if satisfied, he turned abruptly and returned to the camp he had just left.

"He has found the boys' trail and knows that they are gone," said Jack.

His two companions merely nodded. They had

For an instant the knife hung in the air.

known, without being told, what Jack was going to say, and what he was thinking of.

When the Mexican had returned to his camp, the three men could see him seated with his comrades in conversation. There were five of them, and they appeared to be talking long and earnestly. Occasionally they glanced towards the camp where the gold was, as if trying to see if they were watched. At last one of them rises. Going to a roll of blankets, he picks up a gun, and, returning to the group, begins to clean it. His comrades look at him and laugh, as if at a joke, and then all the rest of them rise and get their arms.

"They are going to try and get the gold," says Jack, "and if we don't do something, they will pick us off one by one, and be on the road to Sonora before the boys get back."

"What can we do?" asks one of his comrades.

"We can go down there and tell them that we know what they are after and they have got to go," replied Jack. "By slipping up under cover of the brush and boulders we can be right among them before they know it, and if we get the drop on them, they will have to do what we say. Get your guns and come on."

The three men rose, and, taking their arms, began the descent of the mountain. Slipping from boulder to boulder and taking advantage of the stunted underbush, it was not long before they were close to the camp. As they paused a moment to take breath, they could hear the Mexicans laughing and joking, as they cleaned their guns, while the hunter, Tomas, whom in the past they had all liked so well, was softly singing to himself in Spanish.

As the men rose, the Mexicans looked up in astonishment. It was the first time the Americans had come among them since the discovery of the gold on the mountain top.

For an instant each side looked at the other in silence, and then Tomas, rising and stepping towards the Americans, asked them in Spanish what they desired.

"We want you to get out of here, for we know what you are cleaning up these guns for," replied Jack.

"To go home with," answered Tomas, adding: "We do not care to mine here any longer."

"You are doing it to murder us and steal our gold, and you have got to leave here at once," said Jack.

"We are going to leave just as we told you. But, when you say we are murderers, you lie!" angrily answered Tomas, partly turning to face his comrades to have them verify his statement.

Almost before the words had left his lips, Jack reached out his left arm, and, throwing it round Tomas' neck, drew him backwards till the Mexican's head lay on his shoulder. As he felt the strangling grasp of the arm, Tomas dropped his gun, and, raising his hands, tried to pull the arm from his throat. His hands had hardly touched the arm when a long-bladed knife rose above his face, grasped so tightly that the hand that held it, with its taut muscles and tense knuckles, looked almost as white as marble.

For an instant the knife hung in the air that the fierce eyes looking down over the upturned face of the Mexican might pick the surest place to drive it into the throat, drawn so tightly backward that one could see the arteries throbbing beneath the skin. But only for an instant, and then, so fast that it seemed like a flash of light, it fell and entered the neck in the muscles just below the left ear. One or two steps, as if blindly striving not to fall even in death, and then down goes what was once Tomas, the hunter.

Both sides are on their feet now, and, as they stand, the Americans cover the Mexicans with their guns.

"You had better go, and go at once, and leave your arms behind," says Jack.

The Mexicans look at him for an instant, and then, with a glance at the body, they turn and start across the desert. The Americans watch them until they are out of sight.

The next day, when the pack train, which had been sent for, has arrived, and has been laden with the gold, it is driven down the trail by the camp where the body lies.

The men pause for an instant to look at the corpse.

"Old Tomas," one of them says, "I always thought him pretty square and rather liked him. Maybe, after all, they really did intend to go home without trying to take the gold, as he said."

"Maybe they did," said Jack; "but we couldn't take chances on any man's honesty with all this gold on our hands."

RICHARD SIBERT.

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The Standard Bearer.

Translated from the French of A. Daudet.

THE regiment was fighting on a slope of the railway, and served as a target for the whole Prussian army massed in front of it under cover of the wood. They were shooting at a distance of eighty yards. The officers cried: "Lie down!" but nobody would obey them, and the proud regiment remained standing grouped around their flag.

Towards the vast horizon the sun was sinking, and amid the ripening corn and pasture lands this mass of men, enveloped in a confused smoke, looked like a flock of sheep, surprised, whilst feeding, by the first whirlwind of some awful storm.

It rained bullets on that slope! Nothing could be heard but the crackling of the fusillade, the dull thud of a body in the ditch, and the bullets which rent the air, slowly vibrating, first to one and then to the other side of the field of battle, like the stretched cords of some sinister, resounding machine.

From time to time the colours, which flew above their heads, fluttered in the wind made by the grapeshot, and then sat quietly down in the smoke. At last a voice, stern and proud, arose high above the fusillade, the death-rattles, and the curses of the wounded:

"To the flag, my children; to the flag!"

Soon an officer, vague as a shadow, advanced in this ruddy haze, and the heroic ensign, reanimated, hovered once more before the battle.

Twenty-three times did it fall; twenty-three times was its still warm staff, slipping from a dying hand, seized and once more held aloft; and hardly had the sun sunk down to rest, when the rest of the regiment—scarcely a handful of men—retreated step by step, with the colours, a mere mass of tatters, in the hands of Sergeant Hornus, the twenty-fourth standard-bearer of the day.

Sergeant Hornus was an old fellow who scarcely knew how to sign his own name, and had been twenty years gaining his three stripes. In him were all the miseries of a child, and the brutality of the barracks showed itself on his narrow animal-like forehead, his back bent by the sack; his gait was that of an old veteran; moreover, he was somewhat gruff. But to be a flag-bearer one has no need of eloquence.

On the very evening after the battle the colonel said to him: "You have the colours, my brave man; well, look after them!" And on his poor military cloak, already perforated with rain and bullets, the *cantinière* hastily sewed the golden-braided border of a second lieutenant.

This was this humble being's only piece of arrogance. The old trooper's carriage grew better. The poor creature had been wont to slouch along, his eyes on the ground; he now drew himself proudly up, his look always fixed above, to see this ragged mass wave in the breeze, and his hand held straight in front of him, quite high, above all death, treason, and retreat.

Never was there happier man than Hornus, when the battle was at its hottest, as he held his staff in both hands, well-fixed in its leather socket. He neither spoke nor moved. Serious as a priest, one would have thought he held some sacred emblem. His whole life, his whole force, seemed to be in those fingers clasped around the gilded shreds through which the bullets ploughed their way; and his eyes, full of defiance, looked straight at the Prussians, as if to say: "Try, then, to come and take it from me!"

Nobody tried to, no, not even death.

After Bonny, after Gravelotte, the bloodiest of all battles, the flag went everywhere, hewn to bits, perforated and transparent with holes. But it was always old Hornus who carried it.

At last September arrived, and the army was blockaded at Metz, where, during that long halt, the cannons rusted in the mud; where the finest troops of the world, demoralised by the inactivity, the want of work, and the news of repeated disasters, died of fever and worry at the foot of their piled arms. Neither officers nor soldiers sustained the least hope. Hornus, alone, still had confidence. The love of his tricolour held him far from all; the more he thought of it, the more did it seem to him that nothing was lost.

Unhappily, as they were not fighting any more, the colonel held the standards at his quarters in a suburb of Metz; and the brave Hornus was like a mother deprived of her child. He thought of it incessantly. Then, when the *ennui* was too much for him, he went to Metz, and having seen his favourite in the same place, leaning against the wall, he returned, filled with courage and patience, bringing back to his damp tent dreams of battles and marches, with the three colours, unfolded to the wind, floating over the Prussian entrenchments.

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One of Marshal Bazaine's "Orders of the day" dispelled all these illusions. One morning, when Hornus awakened, he saw that the camp was in a state of excitement, the soldiers stood in animated groups, gesticulating, shouting with rage, and shaking their fists towards the town, as if their anger pointed to a guilty one.

Someone cried: "Let us seize him! Shoot him!"

And the officers let them say it. They marched apart, their heads bent, as if they were ashamed before their men. In truth it *was* shameful. They had just read to 150,000 soldiers, well armed, and still in health, the Marshal's order which delivered them to the enemy without fighting.

"And the flags?" asked Hornus, turning pale.

"The colours were sold with the rest, with the guns, the remainder of the baggage, all ——"

"Goo—goo—good God!" faltered the poor man. "They surely haven't mine." And he rushed off towards the town.

The city was also in a state of great animation. National guards, townsmen, and city volunteers, all crying and rushing about. Deputations were passing, angrily representing themselves to the Marshal. Hornus: he saw nothing, heard nothing. He talked to himself as he ran up the Rue de Faubourg.

"Steal my flag! Nonsense! Is it possible? Have they the right? Let him give the Prussians his own things, his gilded coaches, and his beautiful plate from Mexico! But that, that's mine. . . . . It's my honour. . . . . I forbid anyone to touch it."

All these phrases were broken by his gruffness and want of breath; but at the bottom of it all, the old man had his own idea! A good idea, well agreed upon by himself. To take the Standard, carry it into the middle of the regiment, and hew his way through the Prussians with all those who wished to follow him.

When he arrived there they would not even let him enter. The colonel, who was also furious, would see no one, but Hornus did not listen to this.

He swore, shrieked, and at last threw the orderly on one side.

"My flag. I want my flag."

At last a window opened.

"Is it you, Hornus?"

"Yes, colonel, I want——"

"All the colours are at the Arsenal. You have only to go there, they will give you a receipt."

"A receipt? What for?"

"It's the Marshal's order."

"But, colonel——"

"Be quiet!" and the window was shut.

Old Hornus staggered like a man intoxicated.

"A receipt! A receipt!" repeated he mechanically, then he slowly commenced to walk, recollecting only one thing, that was that the Flag was in the Arsenal, and that he must regain it at all costs.

The Arsenal gates had been flung wide open to allow the Prussian waggons, which were waiting, one behind the other, in the court, to pass.

In one corner were heaped all the Flags of Bazaine's army, thrown together on the muddy paving-stones. Nothing could be more sad than to see those honoured tatters of silk, that *débris* of golden fringes and splintered staves, all that glorious paraphernalia thrown on the ground, soiled by the rain and dirt. An officer of the administration took them one by one, and on calling out the name of the regiment, each ensign advanced to take a receipt. Swiftly, impassively, two Prussian officers superintended the loading.

"'Tis not possible that you should depart like this, dragging your shreds, sweeping sadly the ground, like birds that have broken their wings! You are going to disgrace the beautiful things which have never been sullied, and each one of you takes away a piece of France. The sun of many a long march lies between your folds. In the marks of the bullets you hold a *souvenir* of deaths unknown, fallen, perchance, by an unaimed bullet."

"Hornus, it is yours—they are calling you—go and get your receipt."

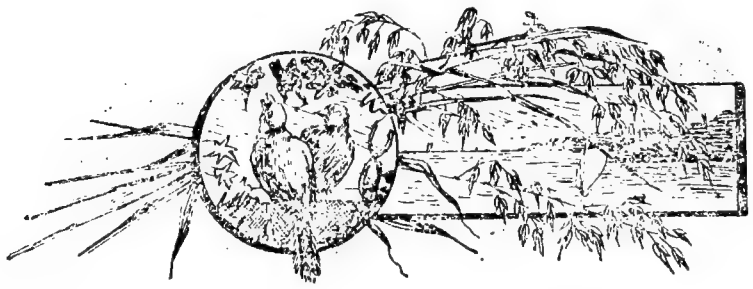
What did he care for the receipt!

The flag was there before him. Yes, it was his, the most beautiful, the most mutilated of all. And, on seeing it again, he thought himself once more upon the slope. He heard the bullets singing, the rattle of the grapeshot, and the voice of the colonel: "To the flag, my children; to the flag!" Then his twenty-three comrades on the ground, and he, the twenty-fourth, throwing himself forward to relift and support the poor flag, which tottered for want of arms to support it. Ah! On that day he swore to defend it, to guard it to the death; and now——

To think of it, all the blood in his heart mounted to his head.

Distracted, aghast, he rushed at the Prussian officer and snatched the beloved ensign from his hands. Then he tried to raise it again high in the air, crying: "To the fla——".

But his voice caught in his throat. He felt the staff tremble, slip between his hands. In that wearying air, that air which weighs so heavily on evacuated towns, the standards could float no more—nothing with pride could exist. And old Hornus fell—dead.



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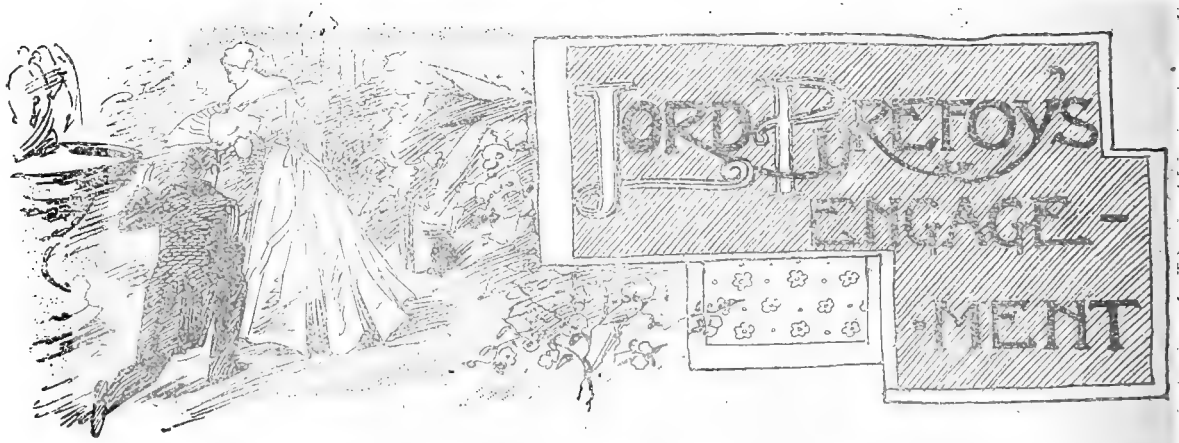

From his earliest childhood Lord Purefoy had the benefit of every good example and precept which money could procure. His mother, left a widow with her only child, could not bring herself to expose him to the temptations of a public school, but had him grounded in Latin by a governess whose high moral character and educational powers were attested by three duchesses, and intrusted him subsequently to the care of a gentleman who, as a fellow of Baliol and chaplain to a bishop, had earned and deserved a reputation for all desirable knowledge and virtue.

Immediately before Lord Purefoy reached the age at which he became qualified to sit and legislate among his peers, two resident tutors, and three who visited the house daily, were engaged in putting on the final touches. With these educational advantages, it is no matter for wonder that he was looked upon by all those who came in contact with him as an altogether model representative of the Upper House.

Lord Purefoy came of age at the country seat of his family, where he owns seven parishes, and returned immediately to London with his mother. He was, and is, a charming and virtuous young man.

For twenty-one years he never gave his mother a moment's real uneasiness; but on the day three weeks after he had attained his majority, he walked into her boudoir, and, without wasting time over any preliminary explanations, announced that he was engaged to be married.

The Dowager Lady Purefoy was seated in her favourite rocking chair, and the start of horror which she gave, almost sent her backwards out of it. As it was, being a young woman for her age, she extended her feet, gripped the arms, and, by a strong effort, maintained her equilibrium. The danger, and her escape from it, steadied her nerves.

"Married, my dear boy!" she cried. "What do you mean? Who is she? Where did you meet her?"

Lord Purefoy answered the last question first.

"I met her, mother," he said, slowly and quietly, as if his mind dwelt with pleasure on the incident, "in St. James's Park."

"Who introduced you?"

"No one."

Lord Purefoy had been admirably educated, but he had never been checked. Before ten minutes were over there had been a "row royal" between mother and son; and she learnt that the family temper, till then dormant, had undoubtedly been inherited by her gentle-mannered son, and also that the future Countess of Purefoy was a barmaid at a Regent Street restaurant, who had asked him the time as he walked home after listening to a debate from the Peers' Gallery in the House of Commons.

In three days Lord Purefoy had gone into chambers in Piccadilly, owing to his mother's refusal to receive his *fiancée*, and the date fixed for the marriage was in every "society" paper. Congratulations and the reverse poured in upon him; but, having gathered the general drift of his relatives' correspondence from the first two or three epistles which he received from them, Lord Purefoy took to burning their letters unread. He was lighting a cigarette with one, at the head of which he had seen the crest of a distant cousin, when a word or two which he could not help seeing caused him to pause and unroll it carefully.

Dear Purefoy,—So delighted to hear of your approaching wedding, and of your intention to marry for love a woman whom you have chosen for yourself, and who, no doubt, is in every way worthy of you. Come down and stay with us for a week, and bring her with you. We go to the Limes to-morrow, so come soon. Your affectionate cousin,

Kitty Golightly.

Now, Lord Purefoy had not seen Lady Golightly since he was sixteen, and had heard such stories whispered at the family councils of the doings at her ladyship's riverside residence as had made his hair curl with horror. If he had seen her on the day before he received her invitation, leaving his mother's house after a visit of an hour's duration, he would not have recognised her, or would hardly have believed that she had been received there.

Nevertheless, he answered her note in the affirmative, and went; and he took Persephone Giles with him, picturing to himself as they whizzed out of Paddington, the reception which he would give the Golightlys some day in return for their early recognition of his beloved one.

"Are they rich, dear?" said Miss Giles.

"Always in debt," he answered; "nobody's enemies but their own, I believe, but foolishly improvident at all times."

"Like as not they are after your money, dear boy," she said.

"A Purefoy never imputes motives," he answered; adding, as she still looked dissatisfied, "you shall help

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your relatives and I will assist mine." And he accomplished the rest of the journey with her head upon his shoulder, while she in turn pictured herself setting up every uncle and cousin who had been kind to her in palatial public-houses, and sprinkling with the dust of her haughty chariot-wheels those who had thwarted her in childhood or prophesied evil results when she adopted the bar as a profession, and exposed herself to the temptations of the metropolis.

Arrived at the Limes, they found that every one had gone upstairs to dress for dinner except Lady Golightly, who received them in the hall, and took Persephone upstairs at once to show her her room. Lord Purefoy walked behind them, bearing what his *fiancée* called her "reticule"; it was in crimson plush, and would, no doubt, have looked charming with a coronet upon it.

Two of the footmen had been carrying up the luggage, and were coming out of the room.

"Bill!" cried Persephone, as one of the men passed her. The man turned; he was a good-looking young fellow, with well-oiled hair and a sickly smile. He knew Persephone, that was evident; but he did not seem to be quite prepared for what followed. She is a warm-hearted girl, and before Lord Purefoy quite realised that a mutual recognition had taken place, his betrothed had kissed Sir Harry Golightly's valet under his mistress's nose.

Lady Golightly had so complete a command over her features, that she says she never changed colour nor smiled; she always says the scene was unplanned and unrehearsed, which may be true.

"Of course, I knew his name was Giles," she told the ladies when she got downstairs, "but I could not guess all Giles were first cousins."

"And Lord Purefoy?" said some one.

"Oh, he has told her never to be ashamed of her relations, and quoted Lady Clara Vere de Vere, and King Cophetua, and the Bible, and all sorts of things, I know; but he did look rather uncomfortable. The person I felt sorry for was the man; he looked as if he wished the stair-carpets would open and swallow him safely down into the servants' hall."

Then some of the men came into the room, and her ladyship was silent.

Lord Purefoy and Miss Giles came down last, and were duly introduced. The other people evidently knew one another and their hostess well; they showed great pleasure at being introduced to Persephone, and some surprise when she s'ook hands with them all round.

It was a ceremony which Lord Purefoy would have cut short if he could have caught her eye. Catching a person's eye is difficult, even when you sit opposite to her at dinner; and Lord Purefoy, on one or two occasions, tried it in vain, much regretting that Lady Golightly should have separated him from the object of his affections.

Champagne always flows at the Limes, and Persephone evidently liked the brand supplied. She apparently also liked the conversation of Captain Masham, who sat next to her. At all events, her laughter was "frequent and painful to Lord Purefoy, and free." He felt for what he correctly imagined to be her foot under the table, and he pressed it warningly.

"Some one's squeezing my foot under the table," she said to Captain Masham, in her outspoken, innocent way. She did not know how loudly she was talking, nor reckon on a sudden pause in the conversation, which made her remark audible to everyone at the table; but she did not mind, especially as no one laughed and no one seemed surprised; indeed, it was curious how much everyone seemed to take Persephone as a matter of course.

The ladies certainly did not speak to her, but the men addressed her across the table, and she answered them freely, all except Lord Purefoy, who grew graver and more silent as the meal proceeded. She was a very handsome girl, and she looked very pretty as she grew animated, though the hand with which she was inclined to gesticulate was not as white as Lady Golightly's. Lord Purefoy had paid a good price for her dress; it struck him at dinner that there was not quite so much of it as his hostess and her fair guests seemed to think requisite. Perhaps their necks and arms were not equal to those of Persephone.

"She is a charming girl," said Lady Golightly to him in the drawing-room after dinner; "so natural!"

"Yes, yes, of course; she is quite a child of nature," he suggested uneasily.

"She has been telling us stories of her past life," said Lady Golightly. "I wonder if you know them all?"

Lord Purefoy blushed furiously. In spite of his strict education, he had understood one of Persephone's anecdotes sufficiently to have warned her then and there not to repeat such things to anyone.

"Where is she?" he inquired.

"In the conservatory with Captain Masham. She seems to have quite captivated him; you had better be careful, though."

"Is he the Captain Masham who——"

"Oh, Purefoy! did the Bishop's chaplain let you read the divorce reports? Poor Charlie! He figured rather badly in that case, I know."

"I wish you would show me the way to the conservatory, Cousin Kate," said Lord Purefoy.

Now Persephone was sitting in a very dark corner, and Persephone, according to her lights, was doing nothing wrong. Perhaps she was chilly; perhaps she did not know it was Captain Masham's arm, and not the back of a wicker chair, against which she was leaning. She certainly did not know that, the week before, a young man who was reckoned to be on the point of proposing to a niece of Lady Golightly's, was tracked into the conservatory, and the clear, cold, useful brilliancy of the electric light suddenly turned on with a snap, just as he was following her upon his knees round the little marble fountain.

The joke was in the worst possible taste; and the roar of laughter which the situation caused broke off for the time, at least, a fairly promising love affair, and caused a grand quarrel in the smoking-room afterwards.

It was only for a second that Lady Golightly turned on the electric light, twisting the little ivory button first to the right and then to the left.

"She is quite a child of nature, Purefoy," she whispered in her softest tones, as she drew him back into the drawing-room; "and so is Captain Masham; perhaps he, too, is her cousin."

The family solicitor thought Miss Giles must really be a very nice girl to accept so small a sum as £5,000, and wondered why Lady Purefoy, who paid it, should say that the whole affair had cost her £7,500. Perhaps Lady Golightly could explain.

P. L.

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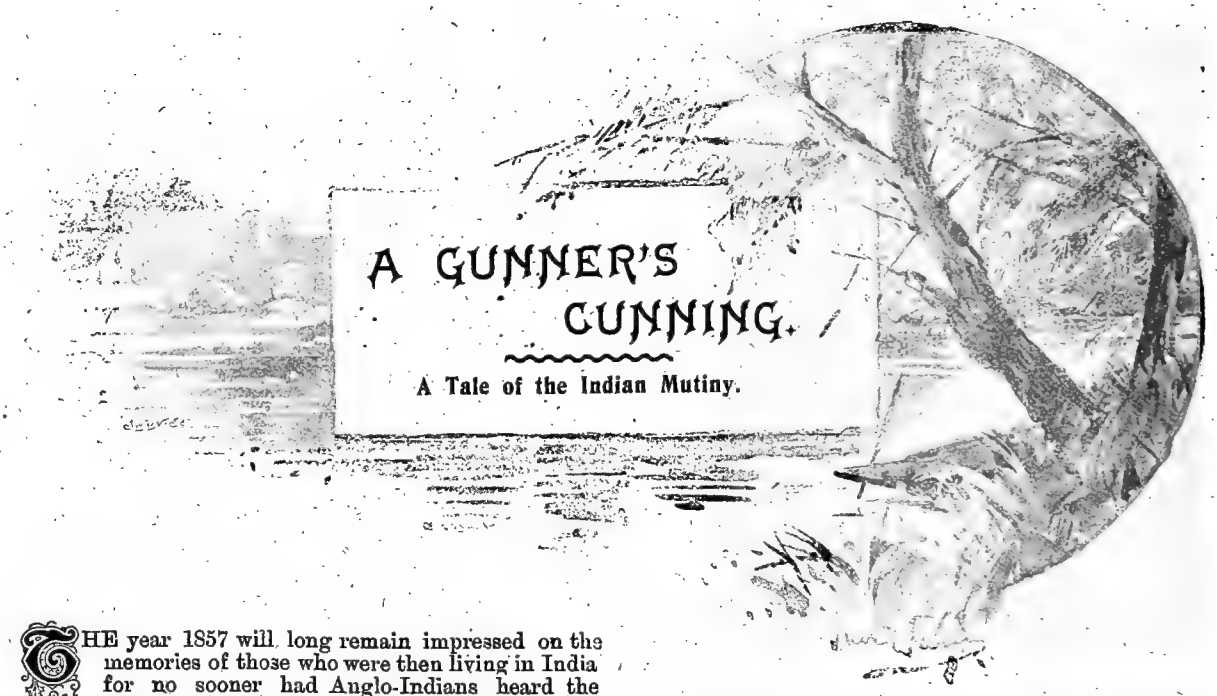

A GUNNER'S CUNNING.

A Tale of the Indian Mutiny.

THE year 1857 will long remain impressed on the memories of those who were then living in India for no sooner had Anglo-Indians heard the welcome news that the war with Russia was over, than their attention was called to the state of affairs in their vicinity by sinister reports of mutiny among the Sepoy troops, many of whom were well-known in all the garrisons of the Empire.

Early in that year I was stationed with my battery of field artillery in the town of Brahmapore, with a small force of troops, to guard a rather important arsenal well-stocked with arms and ammunition, when news was brought of the disbanding of the 19th and 34th Sepoy regiments at Barrackpore.

The majority thought that this was the end of the disturbances, but older heads shook and urged caution, though at first their opinions were laughed at.

All Europeans who were living in the neighbourhood took up their residence in the cantonments; provisions were brought in, and every preparation was made in case of need. Whilst we were in this state of suspense I was one morning about to enjoy my usual bath when I heard my orderly, Denis, inquiring for me, and in a few minutes his head appeared at the edge of the curtains which shut off my bath-room, and in his broad brogue, which always came to the front when he was excited, he called:

"Are you there, sur?"

I felt at once that he had something important to communicate, for his haste and brogue were not at all usual, so I answered:

"Yes, come in."

He did so, and pulled the curtains behind him; but before unburdening his mind, peeped out cautiously once more to make sure no eavesdroppers were near, and then, coming close up to my ear, he whispered:

"Thim devils are comin', sur."

I need hardly say I was out of my bath in a moment, for I believed that the mutineers were at hand, as I felt sure that "thim devils" could mean no other than the rebellious Sepoys.

Denis, however, quickly quieted me by saying that his knowledge only came from a conversation which he had overheard amongst some of the native servants, one of whom, Bag Singh, had been to the bazaar to purchase provisions, and had come back as Denis described him, "sthruting like a peacock," so full of importance was he at being the bearer of the news that the hated Feringees were to be driven away or killed.

At first I felt inclined to think that this was simply another of the wild rumours which were flying about so freely, and laughed at Denis' alarm, and reminded him that informers were not liked where he came from, but he was most earnest in his assertion, and he reminded me that it was not informing when the "haythens were in it."

Having learned from Denis that he had come straight to me on overhearing this conversation, and extracted an assurance that he had not breathed a word to anyone but myself on the subject, I left him to busy himself with my uniform, and ordering him not to speak of the matter to a living soul, I went to the Colonel's quarters, and, finding him enjoying his morning cigar, I told him in a few words all I knew.

He looked serious and thoughtful for a few minutes, and then relighting his cigar, which had gone out during my chat, he said quietly: "Well, forewarned is forearmed, we must give them a warm welcome; go back to your quarters, and find out as much as possible, report to me at once, but don't go beyond the lines without orders." I turned to go, and as I did so the Colonel called to his orderly, and I knew that he would soon have everything ready for the expected attack.

When I re-entered my quarters, I found Denis, while ostensibly brushing my tunic, keeping one eye fixed on the verandah; I turned my eyes in that direction, and saw a bottle of my best brandy apparently hidden under a shrub, but in such a way as to be plainly visible from the native quarters. I looked at Denis for an explanation, but he put his finger to his lips as a signal not to say anything, and coming up close to me with the tunic

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in his hand, a merry twinkle lit up his grey eyes, as he whispered: "I put it there for Bag Singh to steal; that will oil his tongue, and then we'll get the whole truth out of him; there's nothing like a dhrop of the craythur to make a man talk," he added.

He had scarcely finished speaking, when a shadow crossed our path; I looked up; it was Bag Singh, and as he disappeared, so did the bottle. How he took it I never knew, but it was gone.

Denis gave a broad grin and said: "I'll know where to find him directly."

A few moments later Denis also sauntered off in the direction of the stables, while I lit a cigar, and tried to quiet my nerves as well as I could, knowing full well that Denis would get all the possible information easier than I could, for none of the servants knew of his attainments in Hindustanee, and so would not hesitate to talk in his presence, whilst they would suspect me and remain dumb.

One hour went past and then another, and I began to fear that Denis had only wasted a bottle of brandy for no good, when I heard his voice commanding some one to "come along, ye blackguards, I'll show the master the state yer in," and then he appeared, dragging poor Bag Singh and one of the stable boys along, both of them in a state of intoxication.

My first glimpse of the wretched culprits would have made me burst out laughing, had I not caught the very serious look on Denis's face, and I knew at once that he had something important to communicate; so assuming my most determined look, in spite of their most piteous howls for mercy, I ordered Denis to march them off to the guard-room and to keep them there until they were sober.

In a few moments Denis returned, and as he informed me that he had the whole plot, I took him at once to the Colonel's quarters, and there we gained the complete story from him, which was, briefly, that when he left my quarters after the theft of the brandy he had gone down to the stables, where, as he suspected, he found Bag Singh and his boon companion busily engaged in disposing of the brandy under the shelter of some shrubs which grew near one of the small windows, from which Denis was enabled to overhear their conversation.

This conversation, stripped of Denis' "sez I," and "sez he," and "sez I to meself," amounted to this: Bag Singh, having gone down to the bazaar in the early morning, had met an ancient Fakir, who had told him that next morning, about one o'clock, a large body of the mutineers who were then on their way would arrive by the Delhi road, and would fall upon the small British encampment and kill the hated Feringees and take away their guns, which they badly needed. To Bag Singh was intrusted the work of warning the Sepoys stationed at Brahmapore to be ready to join their comrades when they arrived, as the Fakir feared that his presence in the encampment would be viewed with suspicion, and might cause alarm.

Poor Bag Singh, like many another man, had chosen to fortify himself for his task with the brandy which he had discovered so opportunely, and which, as it generally does, proved anything but a friend to its too ardent worshipper.

Having given a few orders to the adjutant, the Colonel told me to have his horse saddled as well as mine, and another for Denis, whom he thought it might be as well to keep out of the men's way, lest he might be tempted to fall into the same trap that he had laid for Bag Singh, and a few minutes later we three were quietly trotting along the Delhi road, which, for some distance, ran between level fields until it came to a stream over which a bridge was thrown, and then it was a gradual rise for about a mile through a wood, which increased in thickness as we reached the crest of the hill, where it was quite a dense mass. From this ridge the road dipped down in a straight line for about a quarter of a mile, where it branched off in two or three directions.

As we reached the crest, we reined in our horses, and the Colonel quietly surveyed the ground for some minutes, and then, turning to me, said: "You will post two of the guns there (pointing to his right). Markham will be there to the left, and Jason will be here with me in the centre; but, mind you, neither show a light nor fire until our guns here begin, and then blaze away until you get the word to cease fire."

So saying he wheeled round, and in a moment we were trotting back to Brahmapore. As we reached the cantonments the adjutant came forward, and saluting the Colonel, informed him that all his orders had been carried out, though the men grumbled when they heard that they were to parade at sundown. At this the Colonel grinned as he answered: "The beggars will enjoy it when they know what it is for."

There was nothing more to do until sunset, so all those who could strolled off to the mess to get what tiffin they could before starting on what might prove the last parade for many of them.

Scarcely had the guard, which turned out to salute the setting sun, been dismissed than the bugles rang out the assembly, and as the men fell into their places, whilst the horses were harnessed, the natives crowded round to see the parade, as they had done dozens of times, and within half an hour the little party on whom so much depended swept out of the gate, which promptly closed upon them and shut in the crowds who would have followed them.

We marched slowly along the road over which I had ridden in the morning. As we neared the crest of the hill "Halt" was quietly passed along the line, and in a few minutes I was ordered to take two guns to the right and push on until I had a good view of the road below, whilst at the same time I saw Markham wheel his two guns to the left. As we reached a point from which we could see the whole valley below, the guns were unlimbered and loaded, whilst I placed the limbers in a position to be sheltered, but at the same time be near to keep up a steady supply of ammunition.

Just as I had finished this to my satisfaction the Colonel came up and inspected the position, running his eyes critically along the sights at the broad white road below, which was destined before many hours to be the death-bed of many a brave fellow, who now, perhaps, was chuckling to himself of an easy victory, and dreaming of a country once more free from the presence of the hated Feringees.

Bidding me order the men to keep in cover, and once more warning me not to fire until the guns in the centre should begin, the Colonel retired. It was then nearly midnight, and the cold, damp night air made more than one shiver as they stood silently listening for a sound. How long the time seemed, and what thoughts surged through men's minds during the dreary watch, which seemed as though it would never end, no pen can tell. One o'clock passed, and the moon, sinking low, threatened soon to leave us in total darkness. Men have gained the Victoria Cross for acts of bravery done in the heat and excitement of battle, and

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right well do they deserve it; but to keep up your courage through a long watch with every nerve strained to its utmost, and feeling powerless to help yourself, not knowing what moment you may be attacked, surely is a more severe task.

These thoughts, among others of boyhood's days, and of those behind us whose very lives depended upon that handful standing silently there, ran through my mind. I had begun to lose thought of why we were there, when I felt my arm touched, and, looking round, found Denis by my side, quietly pointing to a spot in the road, which showed darker in the moonlight.

As we gazed on it, I saw an occasional glint as the moon's rays struck a sword or a bayonet. I quietly moved from one gun to another as I became certain of this, and found the gunners all intent in watching what was evidently an advancing mass of human beings. Just before they reached the foot of the hill they halted, and apparently closed up so as not to leave laggards behind, and by so doing they unconsciously aided in their own destruction when the guns once opened fire.

Their halt was not for long, however, and presently the rumble of their heavy baggage waggons could be heard, mingled with the steady tramp, tramp, which told of trained men marching. On they came, now less than half a mile, now not more than a quarter; could it be possible that those in the centre did not see them! Still on they came; they could not be more than 300 yards off now, when there was a bang, followed by the scream of a shell, which had not burst before it was followed by a second roar, and then all six guns rang together, whilst above the shrieks of the grape shot arose human shrieks and yells, mingled with the screams of terrified animals as they plunged and reared in their wild endeavours to break loose and escape the torrent of missiles which tore through the whole body.

A few bullets flew above our heads when men and horses rushed pell mell down the hill which a few minutes before they had proudly breasted. As long as any mass was seen together the guns roared, but the terrified wretches were soon so scattered as to give no chance of hitting them, and then the bugle rang out the "Cease fire" whilst men asked each other if they were all right, yet each stood to his post for fear the enemy might re-form.

Scarcely had the smoke cleared off, than the sun, at whose coming the moon had paled, sprang up, touching first the tops of the mountains beyond, then, leaping to the tops of trees, it gradually crept down their trunks and spread across the whole earth.

Of those who but a short time before had marched up that little hill, none but dead and wounded remained. We sent down parties to seek for the wounded, and the few they found told too plainly of the effect of our fire at that short range.

As the wounded were discovered they were attended to, and being joined soon after by a party who marched out at daybreak, we buried the dead bodies which strewed the now ploughed-up road, and once more turned our faces homewards, thankful for an easy victory, yet looking forward to harder work in the near future.

Nor were we disappointed, for before many days were over we were relieved and ordered to the front, where, as long as the mutiny lasted, we were constantly engaged, so that when we returned to England there were very few of those who, thanks to the cunning of Gunner Denis, aided by a bottle of brandy, took part in the saving of Brahmapore.

C. F.

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The Secret Closet.

It was a winter's night of piercing coldness in Amsterdam. Banker Brounker sat near his stove smoking a long pipe; opposite was his intimate friend, Von Grote. Madame Brounker and her children were at a party, so the two friends, sure of not being interrupted, conversed confidentially.

"What can be the reason," said Grote to Brounker, "that you will not consent to the marriage of your son with the daughter of Birkenrode?"

"My dear fellow, I do not oppose the match. It is my wife who will not hear of it."

"But what reason can she have to refuse her consent?"

"I cannot tell you," answered Brounker, lowering his voice.

"A mystery!" exclaimed Grote. "Come, you know how discreet I am, let me know about it."

"But will you promise to keep it a secret?"

"I promise faithfully."

"Well, it is now six-and-twenty years since I was married, and I frankly confess to you that I was excessively jealous of my wife.

"My position obliged me to see a great deal of company at home, and I feared that some of my numerous visitors would rob me of my Clotilda's affections; one of these particularly, Colonel Birkenrode, caused me the greatest fear.

"I could not deny him access to my house as he belonged to a very powerful family, neither had anything in his conduct given me reason to do so.

"At the time I speak of I bought this house, where I previously had constructed in secret, behind this stove, a narrow closet, from which I could hear all that passed in this room, wherein my wife received her visitors.

"For a long time Birkenrode contented himself with depicting in the most vivid colours the passions which consumed him; my wife listened without making any answer. At last, one day, he became more impatient than before, and threatened to blow his brains out before her eyes if she would not show a little more pity.

"'But I am not at liberty,' exclaimed she, in a voice interrupted by sobs.

"'And if your liberty were restored to you?' urged the Lothrio.

"'Sir!' said my wife.

"'If you become a widow,' insisted he, 'swear to give me your hand.'

"To this proposition my wife answered only with her tears, and he left her.

"The next morning an extraordinary occurrence greatly increased the agitation of Clotilda. During breakfast a servant came and whispered in my ear that the cook wished to speak to me privately. 'Let him come in,' said I; 'I have no secrets from my wife.'

"The cook came, as pale as death, and with a long face he told me that he had that morning received a packet containing 300 florins, a small phial, and a note telling him to put the contents of the phial into the first eel pasty he made. (You well know my extreme fondness for eels, while my wife cannot bear even the smell of them.)

"He was promised even a greater recompense if he faithfully executed the commission. Fearing some treachery, he had hastened to give me the phial and the 300 florins.

"I immediately put a few drops of the liquid contained in the phial on a lump of sugar and gave it to my wife's little dog. The poor little animal was taken with violent convulsions and expired in a few moments. There was no doubt that the intention was to destroy me.

"That same day Birkenrode came as usual, but Clotilda refused to see him, and wrote to say that she would confess all to her husband if ever he dared to show himself again. Having uselessly tried to calm her anger, he resolved at last to marry; and since that our families have had no communication except that my son has fallen in love with his daughter, and although I have given my consent, my wife opposes it."

"She is right," indignantly exclaimed Von Grote. "I never should have thought Birkenrode capable of such a vile action."

"Ha, ha, ha!" said Brounker, bursting with laughter. "Do you, then, too, accuse him?"

"Who, then, could it be, if he was not the culprit?"

"It was myself, dear fellow; the adventure cost me 300 florins, which I gave to my cook. It was rather dear, but at the same time I got rid of a dangerous rival and a lap dog which I equally detested—ha, ha, ha!"

At this moment the door opened and Madame Brounker entered the room.

"I thought you were at the party, Clotilda," said her husband.

"No; I do not feel very well, and am going to bed. Maurice has accompanied his sister. I have brought you a key, which I have found on your desk: and as it does not seem to belong to any of the locks in this house, some friend of yours must have left it behind him."

Brounker, deeply blushing, took the key. He had recognised it as the key to his private closet.

"My dear," said Clotilda, "I have given Maurice my consent to his marriage with the daughter of Mr. Birkenrode."

"Thanks, dear wife," said Brounker.

"That is good news."

"Mr. Grote," said she, "pray remain and sup with my husband to-night. We have an excellent eel pasty in the larder, which, I assure you, does not contain the slightest portion of poison!"

At these words she retired. Hardly was the door closed, when Von Grote said to Brounker: "You are properly caught in your own net. She has been in your secret closet. He that digs a pit for his enemy often falls into it himself."

E. C. WAGGENER.

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THE MAN IN A HUNDRED.

"NOW see here, my friend," said John Proctor, his honest eyes looking gravely into the tramp's face, as he balanced a sixpence on the tip of his finger. "I'm not going to read you a homily on the subject of labour, but I want to present to you a little matter of statistics. You know, as well as I, that the country is swarming with men of your class. Not fewer than six, begging for money, have stopped me in the street to-day, while down there at the yard"—indicating with his hand a pile of timber surrounding a building in the distance—"we haven't had three applications for work in a month."

"Try me."

"Do you imagine you would work if you had the chance? I have had a little experience with fellows of your sort. You have such remarkable appetites." He addressed him generally as the representative of a race. "You work half-an-hour, then come with the plea that you can't work on an empty stomach, draw an advance of half-a-crown on your wages, and that is the last we ever see of you.

"Come down to the yard this afternoon, however, and I'll give you a job. But take this half-crown and get filled up first."

He had changed the sixpence for a larger coin and held it in his outstretched hand.

The man did not immediately extend his hand to take it. In the moment or two that elapsed the young fellow thought he detected a trace of something allied to resentful pride as a grimy hand closed greedily upon the silver, and the fellow disappeared without even troubling himself to make any formal expression of his gratitude.

As John Proctor took his way down through the park in the direction of his office, he seemed to throw off the unpleasant reflections which had been annoying him with one shrug of his powerful shoulders. The young man's eyes fell cheerily upon the somewhat incongruous array of buildings that constituted the town. He gloried in the homely little edifices, squatting over the ground in various directions.

Had not every foot of timber been supplied from his own yard? And did not this avalanche of trade mean—Annie? Nothing could be mean or poor which brought these years of waiting to an end. He was a practical man, little given to enthusiasm of any sort, but for her sake he looked with glowing vision upon the turreted mountain tops in the distance, with their purple shadows and golden light.

The thought lent cheerful energy to his voice as he entered the yard and gave some directions to Martin, his hard-worked bookkeeper and general factotum. Proctor was deeply engrossed in making out an order for several cartloads of timber, when a shadow darkened the door, and the tramp stood before him. He could not repress an exclamation of surprise. The vagabond observed it, and his face lowered as he asserted himself defiantly.

"Yes, I've come," he said. "What are you going to give me to do?"

John Proctor put on his hat and went with him into the yard, where an empty cart was waiting to be filled. He showed the man a small slip of paper tacked on the end, and was about to explain where he would find the material designated, when the fellow threw off his coat and deftly attacked a pile of lathes which happened to be the first item on the list.

"Hullo!" said Proctor, gazing at him in surprise; "you seem to know something about this business."

"A little," returned the man shortly.

The young man made his way back to the office.

At six o'clock, when the hands came up to receive pay for their day's work, John Proctor saw his *protégé* standing a little distance away. The man made no demand for wages, and his employer took no notice of him. As the men filed out, a personal friend of Proctor came running in the office with a package in his hand.

"Here, Proctor, run them over quickly and sign the receipt. It's the £1,000 from Juarez and Signor. I haven't a moment to lose."

The young man hastily counted the notes, signed his name to the receipt in a bold, dashing hand, and the agent hurried off.

Left alone, Proctor drew from his pocket a long Russian leather pocket-book, and laid the notes carefully inside. As he thrust this into his breast-pocket he chanced to glance towards the window, and encountered the hungry eyes of the tramp following all his movements from without. As the man saw he was detected, he paused, seemed about to speak, then changed his mind and sauntered away carelessly. A vague anxiety assailed John Proctor. It was long after banking hours; there was no help for it—he must be the custodian of the treasure until morning.

He sat up late that night. It was very late when he rose, and, locking doors and windows, proceeded to the little inner room where he slept. He drew off his coat, and, folding it carefully, placed it beneath his pillow. Then he examined the barrels of a bulldog pistol which hung upon a hook beside the bed. Reassured by this precaution, he sank into a heavy sleep.

Several hours before a man had crawled upon a low pile of planks, flanked by two others of towering height. As he stretched himself at full length, with a bundle of shavings for a pillow, he philosophically reflected that such a bed was not to be despised. He was not ill-qualified to judge, for his experience had been wide and diversified, and he had learned to weigh the most

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delicate points of variance with the fine discrimination of a connoisseur.

A little later two glowing sparks of fire seemed to glide down the railway lines, steal round the office, and disappear within the long drying shed at its rear. During their progress these sparks of fire occasionally described magnificent curves in the air, in the accentuation of certain rhythmical utterances in the corrupted Spanish of the Mexican tongue.

John Proctor awoke that night to find himself assailed by a foe mightier than his feeble imagination had pictured. He tried to rise, but found himself unable, oppressed by a terrible sense of suffocation from dense volumes of smoke which filled the air, through which vast sheets of flames darted their forked tongues towards him. Suddenly the wall of flame and smoke was parted, and the face of the tramp bent over him. He was roughly shaken, pulled off the bed, half dragged, half carried through the little private office, and dragged into the larger room beyond, where the fire had begun its work of devastation. Then voice and memory came back, and he shouted:

"My notes! In my coat pocket—under the pillow—let me go!"

For answer he was violently propelled forward into the arms of some men, eagerly crowding through the flaming doorway. He fought with them wildly, and finally broke down and cried like a child.

* * * * *

"Martin," said Proctor, abruptly next morning, "did that fellow who got me out last night come out safely himself?"

"Now I think of it," returned Martin, "he went back a minute, but he got out all right—just as the roof fell in. I thought at the moment a piece of falling timber hit him, but he scrambled off fast enough."

A dread suspicion assailed John Proctor's honest heart, but he repelled it sturdily. Yet all day long, as he wandered dreamily about, answering a thousand idle questions, or fishing from the ruins various mementoes of the wreck, there would constantly intrude upon him the memory of two greedy, devouring eyes peering through a window, a strange retreat into a burning building and disappearance into the shadows. When night came it was necessary for some one to stay and guard the ruins, for if the wind should rise, some smouldering piles of timber might be fanned into a blaze and the remainder of the stock swept away. Martin, wearied and hollow-eyed, offered his services.

"Not a bit of it, Martin. Go home to your wife and babies. I have engaged a man."

Proctor did not add that the watchman he had engaged was no other man than himself, but when the rest had gone home he remained there alone.

He sat down and buried his face in his hands. He knew what not even Martin had guessed, that his disaster had wrought his irreparable ruin. It would require every penny of his insurance money to settle his outstanding liabilities, for he had done business on the rushing plan, and had carried a stock out of all proportion to his capital. If he could only have saved that £1,000, or if he had not been so ambitious. A sharp groan escaped his lips.

Suddenly he rose and stood erect. His quick ear had caught the sound of some heavy body slowly moving over the ground.

"Who is there?"

"Only me. Is that you, guv'nor?"

John Proctor bent forward and perceived a man slowly crawling along in the shadow of a pile of joists. As the figure emerged into the moonlight he saw that the fellow dragged one leg helplessly after him. His suspicions melted away beneath his natural warmth of heart.

"Are you hurt?"

"Only a falling timber, guv'nor, but the smoke got into my eyes, and I can't see very well."

He had drawn himself to Proctor's feet and stopped, turning a little upon his side, his head propped up with his hand.

"You see, when I came through the door, something fell against me, and not seeing you, and not being able to get along very well, there were so many thieves about I was afraid they might make off with this," holding out a flat leather book, which John Proctor eagerly seized. The man went on talking in an absent way.

"I wouldn't have liked to have you think ill of me. You're the first man who gave me a chance since I got down. I wasn't always a loafer, sir. You spoke of my knowing something about the business, and to be sure I ought, if fifteen years as a sorter can teach a man anything. But when my wife died I struck off out West. It's been hard luck ever since—and my little girl—back there with her grandparents ——"

His voice seemed to fail for weakness.

"What have you eaten to-day?" asked the other sharply.

The man answered reluctantly, and almost in a tone of apology:

"You see, sir—down there among the timber—how could I?"

John Proctor was a man given more to action than speech. He addressed the man now in clear, decided tones.

"Do you think you could hold on to my back while I carried you down to the hotel?"

"Why, sir? It wouldn't be fit."

"Shut up! Put your arms round my neck."

The office and taproom of the hotel held its usual quota of respectable loafers when John Proctor entered with the uncouth figure on his back. A gurgle of laughter ran through the crowd. The majority fancied the young man's brain had been turned by his recent losses, and that his dementia had taken the form of a violent development of the weakness with which he had been accredited. The laughter suddenly ceased when the young man went straight to the manager, saying, in clear, ringing tones:

"Give me the best room you have. This man, who saved my life last night, is badly hurt. Some of you," turning to the idlers, "go at once for a doctor."

A dozen men sprang forward to relieve him of his burden, to help him carry the poor fellow to a comfortable room, where he was gently laid upon the bed. The sufferer received these attentions in silence. His dim eyes stared incredulously about the room, and into the kindly faces bending over him. That anything like this should happen to him was beyond his comprehension. How long would it last? Would they let him have one good night's rest before turning him out again? But what was this? The stalwart young timber merchant, speaking huskily to the doctor:

"And mind, McLean, do your best. I owe him more than I can tell you. Put him in good trim to take the foremanship of my yard when I get stocked up."

This silly old vagrant buried his face in his pillows and wept.

SILAS MACKAY.

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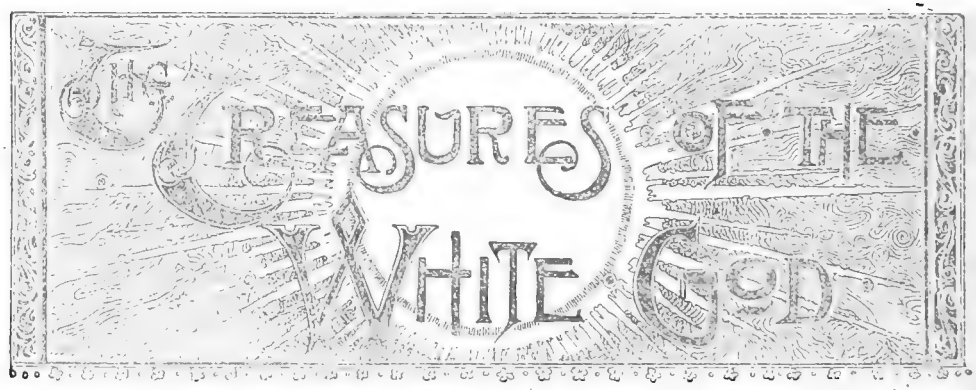

CHAPTER I.

The Hands of Justice.

MOONLIGHT on the water, one great glare of electric radiance on the land—a placid lake, a park of green; domes, spires, and minarets—a picture of fairy-land enchantment—the great World's Fair at Chicago!

The last decade of an eventful century was galloping to its end, mad and riotous with the fever heat of progress; the last hour of the day was ebbing, but, as in a vivid picture, the glow real and the glow artificial hovered over the scene, permeated it, irradiated it, made gleaming waterway and towering structure plain as day.

The blue calm lake was a royal path to a land rich with magnificence; a boulder-fretted beach led to marble esplanades. Beyond that spread all the beauties of art, all the rarities of science that opulence could tender to the intelligence of two continents.

The mosque, the castle, the mansion, the châlet, the villa, the Esquimaux hut; railways, vertical, circular, in duplicate; air ships impossible; structures blazoned from base to dome with statues and masks; tesselated floors, representing years and a lie to every square yard; edifice on edifice—the Roman, the Grecian, the Doric—in marvels of architectural beauty—a vista of wealth, invention, glory, seen only once in the living, throbbing brow of the nineteenth century—the crowning genius of six thousand years!

Yet lifeless, like some dead city deserted, humanity seemed absent, swarms of insects whirred past the spluttering lights, the waves of the lake swisked softly, a faint breeze stirred the trees. Besides these, only the echo of distant city turmoil broke the sombre silence until—clang!

The gong in the office near the great gates of the Exposition sounded forth a rude, sharp, sudden alarm. Only once—but a watchman, dozing in the shadow of his shelter box, sprang to his feet like an automaton.

A bar moved, a chain rattled, a wicket shot back. The watchman peered out.

"What is it?"

Irritation, suspicion, tinged the challenge. Prompt, imperious, came the stern reply:

"Open."

"To whom? The other gate."

Half way, in an explanatory direction, the watchman paused, and with almost absurd haste turned the great lock and swung ajar the gates.

For the midnight visitor had thrown back the lapel of his coat. There was a silvery glint, but not so blinding but that the watchman could read across the gleaming badge of authority the words:

Inspector of Police.

That name had magic to give the watchman hands of fleetness and words obsequious. The World's Fair brought not only the privileged and spendthrift of earth to its portals, but the knaves of every nation as well, and the local police was a potent factor in protecting the one class, and in watching the other.

Mr. Inspector stepped through the gate briskly; not a muscle of his fine impenetrable face moved as he beckoned to a companion to follow.

The latter was lithe, keen-eyed, every nerve constantly on the alert; his whole make-up embodied the typical detective; those restless well-shapen fingers of his showed that he could with equal celerity, neatness, and despatch snap the handcuffs over a burglar's brawny hands, or remove a diamond bracelet from the white dainty wrist of a duchess.

To this man, with a sweeping glance that took in the fenced inclosure at a look, the inspector whistled softly.

The other, with bent head and pursed lips, seemed whistling noiselessly, as if that operation added concentration and comprehension.

The while he had reversed the thin Malacca walking-stick he carried, and as he nodded ever and anon in assent to some suggestion or direction of his superior officer, he employed those restless hands of his in fashioning to a fine point a white chalk crayon.

He looked up as the inspector concluded, fitted the unshaven end of the crayon into the hollow brass fitting at the end of the stick, placed it under his arm, and started off towards the nearest building.

"Hold on!" involuntarily ejaculated the watchman. "Might I ask——"

The watchman deprecatingly ventured half a query.

"What we're after?"

"Yes."

"Don't mind. *You're* all right. *You've* the making of a good man in you. Try the local force when you leave here."

The watchman fluttered delightfully. Praise from such a high source as Mr. Inspector Grey meant something. It might mean flattery, the motive delay until his efficient assistant had pursued certain necessary investigations unhindered, but the watchman never thought of that.

"Let me see; last time I was here it was to quell the labourers' riot," pursued the inspector. "Time before, pickpockets in the visiting crowds. This time——"

He paused impressively, meanwhile his leisurely eye scanning the near distance. He smiled approvingly to himself as what resembled a blue gleam shot from a miniature dark lantern showed, flashed, and disappeared near a large temporary frame structure. Then he said:

"We are looking for a man."

"Criminal?" mumbled the watchman curiously.

"Rather."

"Reward?"

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"Yes," replied Mr. Inspector, with a serene smile.

"Must be one of the workmen?"

"Exactly."

"You don't happen to know his name?"

"Most emphatically we do!" retorted Mr. Inspector briskly.

"That's a clue."

"Not his right one."

"Eh?"

"Not his right name, I say."

"Why not?"

"He dropped that two weeks since at the doors of the prison he had occupied. Real name lost in a number. His was 407."

"Long sentence?"

"A lifer."

The watchman gave utterance to an excited whistle. Here was an important case.

"And you traced him here?"

"Direct. That is, we know that Robert Lane applied for work at the city office of the Exposition. That's him."

While he spoke the inspector had started in the footsteps of his now invisible assistant.

The watchman halted as they neared the first building. He took the opportunity to reach in through the open doorway, and groped among the pails, clothing, and tools that hung there.

"I'll get the keys of the works' office," he remarked. "They keep all the books there that record the workmen. Do you see? If Robert—Robert——"

"Lane?"

"Yes, Robert Lane," repeated he eagerly. "If his name is there, it will give his number, line of apportioned labour, dormitory section, and all that. We'll trace and nab him. Do you see?"

"Why! you *are* a shrewd one, you are," commended Mr. Inspector, clapping his companion heartily on the shoulder—"a regular sleuth—a second Vidocq!"

Bantering raillery was the essence of Mr. Inspector's tones, but the watchman never noted it. He continued his groping, but suddenly started, with a glance at a small cottage just beyond them, where a light showed and vanished just then.

He employed those restless hands of his in fashioning to a fine point a white chalk crayon.

"Why," he exclaimed, "some one's in the works' office now."

Mr. Inspector blinked craftily.

"And the keys ain't here!" supplemented the watchman. "Some one has taken them."

That soothing imperious hand of the inspector rested on the arm of his impulsive companion.

"Don't get excited," he remarked; "my assistant has the keys."

"What!"

"Exactly, and he is your midnight visitor to the works' office."

The watchman turned fairly pale. A stranger inspecting the records of the Commission! Such high-handed interference!

The light faded from the office, but the inspector walked on briskly, those wonderful eyes of his looking in four different directions at once, the watchman tramping sullenly by his side.

The former paused finally, but only for a moment. He had found what he was looking for—a prearranged clue as to the operations of his assistant.

That white chalk crayon had been brought into requisition. These men were proceeding on a system of secrecy and caution that would eventuate in closing the net upon the ensnared bird at the right moment, and in the right way.

A broad slab of blue stone lay tilted against a pile of brick. The electric lights illuminated it clearly.

Across its surface was freshly scrawled a chronicle in white, which read simply:

Dormitory D.

The watchman could not help but observe it. He pricked up his ears, and his clouded face lightened.

"He's fixed the man!" uttered he excitedly, in the zest of the man-hunter, forgetting the mild trickery of his companion.

"It looks so," nodded the inspector sagely.

"Dormitory D—I'll show you——"

"No need," interrupted the other brusquely. "Dean always leaves a trail when we are working in harness."

The "trail" was a series of chalk marks, and they were certain guides as to the progress of Detective Dean. They covered rock, brick, and timber—two criss-cross marks, made hurriedly, but always with the point of the angle indicating a certain direction.

"Here we are," announced the watchman, pausing finally before a rude wooden structure, two storeys high.

"Ah! this is where the workmen sleep?"

"Yes."

"This is Dormitory D. Door open. Here's your keys, left in the lock. Thanks, my friend."

The watchman received the keys with dubious welcome.

"Go quietly," warned the inspector, as they started up the stairs. "Our man is no ordinary fellow—quick as a ferret, and full of resources. He made one of the most remarkable escapes from prison."

Mr. Inspector's stern lips closed like clamps as they reached the top of the staircase.

It looked into an immense room, dimly lighted by turned down gas jets.

Built of frail timber, and running its entire length, were two rows of bunks, or rather partitioned off rooms; they were roof-less, and fronted each other across a ten-foot passage way. Behind them were the rows of side windows to the structure proper.

What had closed Mr. Inspector Grey's lips, and what now held the watchman silent, was a vision of the lithe, active detective, who, standing in the passage way, lifted a significant finger warningly.

He never noticed the watchman as he approached them with noiseless feet, that seemed shod with velvet.

"All right!" he whispered to the inspector.

"Man here?"

"Yes."

"Which room?"

"That's the puzzle. See here."

The detective lowered even that whispering tone of his, and a brief but evidently important colloquy ensued, during which they cast frequent glances at the watchman.

Then, a decision apparently arrived at, Mr. Inspector approached the watchman, that old serene smile of his coming to the surface.

"Here's where you come in!" he announced blandly.

"Eh?" muttered the other, quivering.

"You can help us. If any trouble comes to you, I'll guarantee a better place on the local force."

"You will!" ejaculated the watchman, brightening up.

"I've said it."

"What do you want?"

"There's over two hundred men asleep in those little rooms."

"Just two hundred and forty."

"We want to find out in which one our man is."

"Robert Lane?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Inspector.

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The watchman reflected. He turned over a score of rapid plans in his mind. Then his face flushed excitedly.

"I have it!" he breathed convincedly.

"Good! only make no mistake. A lifer on a furlough sleeps with one eye and both ears open."

"Never fear! Leave it all to me."

The watchman, regarded engrossedly by the others, advanced to the centre of the broad passage-way.

Suddenly he lifted his stentorian voice—

"Robert Lane!"

Falling sharply upon that sleeping air, disturbed only by low, steady breathing, the effect was like a pistol-shot in a close room.

There was a stir, a palpable rustle, in one of the rooms. Thither Mr. Inspector glanced. Thither, striking the instinctive crouch of a tiger, Detective Dean bent one ear, his fingers working restively.

The next moment, however, from a compartment three doors removed, sounded a firm wide-awake voice—

"Here!"

Instantly attention was directed thither.

"Get up," spoke the watchman again.

"What's wanted?"

"New line of work. Orders."

The watchman winked at the two officers with a grim sense of humour, as he pictured a new line of work, indeed!—picking oakum or breaking stones.

Then he waited. Three pairs of eyes were riveted on the door of the compartment, awaiting the appearance of their man.

One minute—two minutes—three. The watchman began to grow impatient.

He approached the door.

"Lane, Robert Lane, wake up!" he called out.

There was no reply this time.

"Do you hear me? Wake up, wake up!" he vociferated, pounding on the thin door until it rattled.

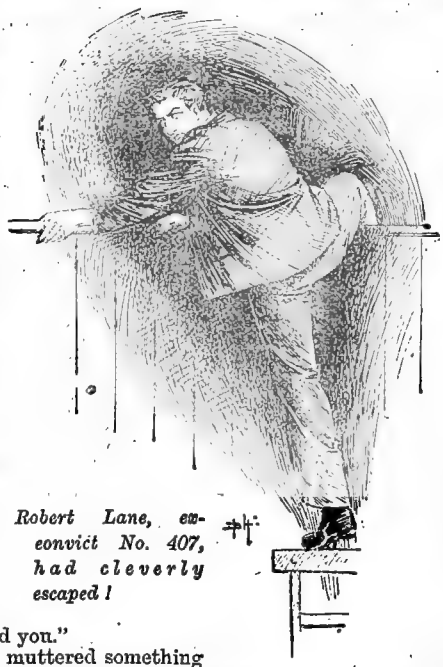
"E—e h?" growled a sleepy voice.

"Wake up, I say!"

"What for?" came the lazy drawl.

"What for!" snapped out the watchman. "Didn't I just tell you?—special work."

"I never heard you."



Robert Lane, ex-convict No. 407, had cleverly escaped!

Mr. Inspector muttered something about "sleepy head," and grasped the revolver in his pocket more tightly.

Mr. Detective Dean started, and uttered a barely perceptible "Ah!" and "Those two voices were not the same!" Then, unperceived by the others, he moved lightly as a cat to the door of the compartment behind which the rustle had sounded when that name, "Robert Lane," had first been spoken.

The other two awaited the appearance of the last speaker. The inspector stood at the side of the door, a pair of handcuffs in one hand, ready to pounce upon his victim the first moment he should become visible. The watchman, expecting now a final crisis, moved nervously from one foot to the other.

"Night work's double pay, so I don't mind," sounded from the compartment, and then the inside button jarred back, and the door opened.

Mr. Inspector, however, made no forward pounce, as a half-dressed man shambled into the corridor.

"It's not our man!" gasped the officer.

"What!" panted the watchman. "See here, ain't you Robert Lane?" This with a vigorous shake at the man's arm.

"Eh! me? No."

"You answered to the name!"

"I didn't."

"Why——"

"You mean Lane, that fellow that came here yesterday?"

"Yes, yes!" assented the inspector eagerly.

"Clean-shaven face, dark hair; tall as you are?"

"That's him!" nodded Mr. Inspector.

"That's his room"—and the man pointed straightway to the door of the very compartment from which the rustling sound had proceeded.

Mr. Inspector arched his eyebrows strangely.

"A trick," he muttered. "The man took warning, climbed over the partition into that other room, and diverted our attention to this fellow——"

The watchman interrupted the speaker with an intelligent cry.

Forthwith he sped to the first compartment indicated.

He waited not for parley, but with one vigorous kick he sent the door crashing inward from its hinges.

Then agape, he pointed to the cot and other furniture of the compartment.

"Look!" he choked out simply.

"Yes, I see evidences of a hasty flight—disorder," returned the inspector grimly. "He stepped to this chair"—the inspector imitated the movement. "Aha!"

That word expressed volumes, for it was caused by a glance over the top of the board partition.

Beyond, the line of windows of the room proper showed.

One was open. It told the story. Robert Lane, ex-convict No. 407, had cleverly escaped!

"He's gone!" muttered the inspector, coming into the corridor again. "It's a free-for-all chase now! Dean! quick—where's Dean?"

Where, indeed? For the inspector's assistant had mysteriously disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

The End of a Long Chase.

A nettled expression crossed the inspector's face as he realised that some one had blundered in leaving the side windows of Dormitory D unguarded, and that some one, probably, himself.

Hopeful relief succeeded, however, as he noted the absence of his trusted assistant. Had Dean anticipated the ruse of the missing man—was he already on his trail?

He did not impart his anxieties to the watchman. What refined interest could the man with his brain take in the emotions of a man who knew that his own reputation, the peace of mind of his employers, a mighty import, attached to the recapture of Robert Lane, escaped convict No. 407?

Wealth, influence, the protection of some great interest, depended on the housing in of the fugitive once more. He was no ordinary prisoner—this much the inspector suspected; his recapture meant a princely reward from opulent hands—this much the inspector knew.

"Come," he said, simply, but sharply, after a moment of deep, excited thought.

"Where?" blurted out the watchman.

"On the trail of that man. He is somewhere in the grounds. About the other watchmen?"

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"Twenty on duty—at the gates and various buildings for fire and all that."

"They can be reached?"

"Simultaneously and speedily."

"How?"

The watchman ran down the stairs, and the inspector, following him, sped to the works' office.

An alphabet electrical transmitter lay open on a desk. He tapped its centre key, after lighting the gas.

Instantly a series of responsive taps sounded from a keyboard attached to the wall near by, and as many as twenty numbers in succession showed out, as some electrical contrivance, operated at the various guard-posts, sent their tiny, japanned shuttle fluttering back.

"All right," announced the watchman. "The guards are waiting. Give your instructions."

"Close every guarded avenue of exit against Robert Lane; height 5 feet 8 inches, weight 160 pounds, fair complexion, dark hair"—and so on, in a monotonous drawl, the inspector called out his message, while the watchman tapped its letters from the instrument to the various stations of watchmen round the grounds.

"That'll stop him," he muttered convincedly. "He can't scale a fence without being seen; he can't open a gate unless he kills a watchman first. There's only one other way."

"Ah, one other way?" insinuated the inspector.

"Yes; the lake front."

Mr. Inspector started at this. Then forthwith he led the way from the office.

They passed building after building, crossed the bridge, lined the esplanade, and neared the open waters, where a great model warship was in process of construction. Just beyond it a canal had been cut, semi-circular in shape, running from the lake and into that body of water again, some six hundred feet distant. Employed as a harbour for constructing boats, and to afford dockage, its shores were littered with timber and iron.

Just as they approached this spot the moon went under a cloud. The inspector halted.

"I fancy our man has made for the lake," he muttered. "There's any amount of water craft lying about that he might impress into service, get beyond the limits of the grounds, land south or north, and skip for new fields."

He scanned the darkened surface of the lake keenly, but discerned that beyond the radius of the electric lights a score of boatmen might be rowing about unseen.

"If I could find Dean," he began speculatively. "That's him!"

With a hopeful start he peered eagerly about him, for just then, low but perfectly clear and distinct, a peculiar whistle cut the air.

"The detective?" queried the watchman palpitatingly.

"Yes; that's his signal."

"It came from near the canal."

Mr. Inspector's reply was to spring from the spot, and he drew his revolver as he did so.

The interested watchman, following movements and direction, viewed a startling scene at just that moment.

Like a fox breaking from cover, a wild form had dashed into view from behind a pile of timber. In a vivid flash of recollection the watchman recognised the new-comer from the description he had telegraphed to his *confrères* not half an hour ago.

The full refulgence of the electric lamps revealed a trim, athletic form, and features strongly marked with the characteristic one observes on old Roman coins—a profile pure and classic as that of a king of tragedy.

Directly at his heels, covering the ground in prodigious bounds, sped Mr. Detective Dean.

The inspector, with an excited shout, cut across a dock to intercept the fugitive, while his assistant kept on in a straight line, as if determined to tire out the man he was running down.

The latter came to a momentary, dismayed pause as he reached the banks of the canal. In one swift glance he took in the situation; in one quivering moment of space he reflected, decided, acted.

Like a stag before the hounds, it was evident that his original intention had been to take to the water and leave no trail, but the lake was fully five hundred feet yet distant. Pursuer number one was hot on his heels; pursuer number two might head him off ere he accomplished half the space.

The full refulgence of the electric lamps revealed a trim, athletic form.

In this predicament he scanned the canal. It was wide, it was deep, but once across it, once on the island it formed, he could gain the farther beach. He was an expert swimmer; freedom seemed assured.

Splash!

Without a particle of hesitation he leapt over the dock. The water lay ten feet below. He struck it with a blinding splatter.

On the shore, frantic with excitement, the inspector stood regarding him, levelling his revolver, lowering it—resolute, undecided by turns.

"Don't shoot," spoke Dean, in low, purring accents of confidence. "He's trapped."

"I don't see it."

"Wait!"

Splash! A second more, and the resolute assistant, denuded of hat, coat, and vest, was in the canal, in his white shirt, resembling some mighty swan amid those gruesome shadows.

The fugitive reached the opposite shore first. He trod water, and looked up blankly at the unbroken log wall that reached perpendicularly to the top of the dock.

Then, groping for and finding various nails, interstices, and projections that admitted of a hand-hold, he began to slowly and laboriously elevate himself.

Near to the very top, panting, well-nigh exhausted, he wavered. His hand dug into a cavity, the rotten wood surrounding it began to crumble. He faltered in his steadiness, fell back, and then, with one desperate upward spring, made a wild clutch for an enormous spike that protruded from a great log lying directly among a heap on the wharf planking.

With a vast sigh of relief he dragged himself upward. An ejaculation of dismay escaped his lips as he was about to pull himself to a position of security. It blended with accents of horror the ensuing moment, for his action had precipitated a direful catastrophe.

His weight had become bulked in a desperate clutch on the spike. The sturdy piece of iron was securely driven, but the immense log in which it fitted was not, as the refugee had supposed the coping piece of the dock, but a loose timber, which, carelessly projecting over the edge of the wharf, needed only a push, a dragging pull, to disturb its equilibrium, to send it hurling to the watery void over which the fugitive hung suspended.

A cold horror came into his heart, an instinctive shudder seized his frame, as, with an ominous creaking sound, the great timber swayed, quivered, and groaningly began to slide out of place.

His eye quailed as, confronted with a choice of two

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terrible alternatives, he wavered, uncertain how to act, foreseeing mutilation, death inevitable, in the next fierce downward plunge of the mute, formidable monster his own rashness had changed into an irresistible engine of destruction.

To drop back into the water meant to be crushed a second later by the descending log. To climb up that seemed impossible, for already the log, turning, wrenched his arm down and under, and tore his clutch from the sharp-edged spike.

In the presence of death a moment seems an eternity. Convict 407 had time to think, to calculate, to act, but barely time. A grim, desperate expression in his fear-haunted eyes—such an expression as the face of the shipwrecked mariner wears when a distant sail is sighted—he described a sudden, a peculiar, an apparently aimless movement.

It was to fling himself clear of the log by springing upward with the agility and nerve of a practised gymnast.

Then a wild, frantic grope, and from his eager lips fell a gasping, broken murmur of relief and hope commingled.

"Safe!"

For his groping fingers had struck and clutched an iron ring sunk in the dock planking. About the smooth metal circle they closed with a grip like that of a giant.

They saw him hang to the ring, limp but resolute, by one hand. Then they saw his body sway, heard a grinding crash, and the inspector fairly panted:

"Mercy! the log!"

"He's done for!" gulped the watchman.

A wild scream of vivid pain rang from the lips of the man upon whom their eyes were centred.

Something had happened. The rolling timber had continued its progress. It slid under him, flinging the upper half of his body out like a distended balloon, and then poised for a final dive into the canal, whirled, caught one of his feet against the side of the slimy dock wall, crushed it downward, almost wrenched the man free, and with a mighty splurge landed in the water.

It was the grinding tear of the timber that had wrung from lips not unused to torture the cry that echoed like a shriek across the silent scene.

Mr. Detective Dean had placidly viewed the manœuvres of the fugitive with such a practical, sanguine look as the fowler bestows on the bird struggling in the meshes of a sure net. His quick eye foresaw the peril of venturing too near the wharf edge. He trod water until the log had descended. Then a few lusty strokes brought him to the dock.

He made a leisurely survey of the frowning face of bolted timbers, and finally clambered at a favourable point to the top of the wharf.

"Hurry! hurry!" sang out the watchman from across the canal, dancing from one foot to the other in suspense, and pointing excitedly, "he's making for the water."

The inspector's assistant paid but little heed to the words. He swept the island with a calculating eye. Nearing the lake was his man, but a glance showed that he was no longer in condition to cope with the ability and perseverance of the officer.

He was limping painfully, dragging a shattered foot behind him, in a way that showed that only desperation, the last flaming resolution of a doughty mind, sustained him. He neared the edge of the lake, gazed out upon the void of the waters, made a movement to spring into them, hesitated, turned, saw the detective approaching, and then, with a startled ejaculation, limped to a rude water craft moored near by.

The detective saw him reach its deck. It was a long flat boat, with a shallow hold—a scow littered with shavings and boards. Amid this *débris* the fugitive disappeared.

A satisfied smile played about the lips of the ferret who had run his game to cover. His victim, caged, crippled, helpless, was at his mercy completely. Mr. Detective Dean was a wise man, however. He knew his business clearly. His ability had tracked the fugitive, but the honour of the actual arrest must fall to the lot of his superior officer. It was policy to thus apportion the case in hand—to the inspector all the directing ability and the reward; to the grim, silent assistant all the work—and his enigmatic eyes flashed peculiarly as he seemed to chuckle inwardly over an interest in the case, a knowledge of some minor details hidden even from the devouring mind of Mr. Inspector Grey.

The resolute assistant, denuded of coat, hat, and vest, was in the canal.

He took out his signal whistle. Its gamut was limited, but in some mysterious way it informed the distant inspector of his position and wishes, for there was a return whistle. Then fixing his eyes upon the boat, particularly watching the water exposure of the craft, the detective seated himself on a pile of sand, and waited patiently, placidly.

Five—ten—fifteen minutes passed by. Then two hurrying, perspiring forms were outlined, coming from the north-end of the island. The inspector and the watchman had run round to the frail swing-bridge there.

"Well! where is he?" panted the inspector, puffing laboriously, and glaring disappointedly all about him.

The assistant nodded towards the lake, took out a cigar case, offered it to his superior with a bow, and to the watchman in turn, arched his eyebrows at their refusal, rather irritably given, for their anxieties were centred to the fate of the fugitive, and selecting a weed himself, lit it, and remarked with exasperating coolness:

"He's just resting. Shall we stir him up?"

"Resting! where?" projected the inspector.

"On that boat yonder."

"I don't see him."

The imperturbable detective, puffing placidly at his

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cigar, arose and directed his steps towards the craft in question.

It was secured by a rope from a stern post, which was tied round an iron crowbar driven into the sand. The bow swung out into the lake, and the boat swayed as the waves tugged at it, as if to tear it free and sport with it.

Dean stepped aboard, and the others followed him. He walked over to a heap of shavings and stirred them up with his foot. His eyebrows arched a trifle—no fugitive in hiding there!

A heap of boards was next investigated. The face of the detective looked blank.

"Hello," he uttered simply, and he gazed seawards thoughtfully.

"He ain't here," spoke the inspector testily.

"I fear not," responded Dean, his assurance deserting him. "I kept a close eye on the boat and the water."

"He's slipped you — swam away."

"Impossible!"

"But he is not here?"

"No—ah!"

The detective glided to the stern of the boat. An uncovered hatchway showed. Balancing himself on the edge, he peered down into the darksome void, bent his ear, listened intently, and then sung out in a stentorian tone:

"Robert Lane, the game is up. We want you!"

No reply.

The inspector and his companion crowded closer to the side of the assistant.

"Is he down there?" queried the former.

"Yes."

"Sure?" asked the watchman.

"His foot was bleeding. There's the trail," spoke Dean, indicating various lurid stains round the hatchway frame.

"Let me take him."

The excited watchman thought a share of the honour of arrest would raise him in the estimation of his employers. Before the others could deter him, he had sprung into the open hatchway, seized the notched post that served as a ladder, and began a descent into the hole.

"In the name of the law!" sounded his voice grandiloquent but hollow, and then it suddenly changed.

"Murder—help—oh! the ruffian—pull me out!"

A frantic hand waved spasmodically into view. The astonished Dean seized it, and dragged its owner out upon the deck of the boat, where the watchman forthwith applied himself to rubbing his knee, and uttering doleful plaints of pain and misery.

"What's the trouble?" demanded the inspector gruffly.

"He attacked me."

"Who did?"

"The man in the hold. Oh, he's there fast enough, never fear! And in fighting trim, too; he struck at me with a stick."

"Ah, he means fight, does he?" muttered the inspector. "I'll soon settle this. Robert Lane!"

He advanced to the hatchway and shouted the name sternly down into the hold.

There was no response.

They saw him hang to the ring.

"We have you cornered; escape is impossible. You are injured, and need attention. Come up and surrender yourself, and you shall receive considerate treatment. Otherwise——"

Click!

The inspector recoiled. That keen, sharp, metallic sound was ominous, aggressive, menacing.

"Stand back, or I shall fire!" came the quick, impressive words from below. "Mr. Inspector Grey, liberty is dear to me. I shall fight for it. I am armed. You shall never carry me back to the living tomb from which I escaped."

"He means it; don't tempt him," purred the ready assistant, with a firm hand gently drawing his superior officer out of range of a possible shot from the hold. "Don't you see, he has us at a decided disadvantage? We dare not venture in range while we do not know where he may be lurking in the darkness."

"Then?——"

"The simplest way out."

"And that is?"

"Wait for daylight."

Mr. Inspector Grey thought of his comfortable bed at the station, and moved restively, irritably.

"Or get half-a-dozen watchmen to help us. He'll probably hesitate shooting at a man who is not his natural hated enemy—a full-fledged police officer."

"Very good," growled Grey.

"And meantime——"

The detective approached the hatchway opening. Its cover lay beside the aperture. With a deft jerk he flung it into place. Flipping the iron bar that secured it through the grooves, he announced triumphantly:

"That cages him safe. Now then, my man, brisk is the word!"

He locked his arm confidently through that of the watchman, flinging his lighted cigar upon the deck of the boat, and centreing his entire interest in directing his companion. He walked from the boat a short distance, to impress upon the watchman's mind the necessity of haste and intelligence in bringing half-a-dozen officers to assist in dislodging the fugitive. The inspector followed them mechanically.

The watchman sped for the bridge, and the detective started to retrace his steps.

"He can't escape, but we'll get nearer the boat," he began, when the inspector interrupted him.

"The boat!" he repeated, with a wild start—"where is the boat?"

Where? indeed! They were quite a distance beyond the radiance of the electric lights, but hitherto the faint reflection and the clear moonlight had held the old, flat boat in vivid outline.

Just now a quick breeze had sprung up from the north, and scurrying rain clouds shut out the sky. The sudden transition to gloom was complete, but not sufficient to prevent a sight of the boat, had it been there.

It was *not* there. Mr. Inspector strained his eyes, with an ejaculation of alarm. His companion darted to the spot where the craft had bobbed and floated a minute ago.

The inspector coming up, found him staring vaguely at a limp, flexible object in his hand. It was the rope that had

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secured the boat. One end was still attached to the iron crowbar driven into the sand. The other showed a waxy, compact stub of strands, where some keen blade had severed it at a blow.

"What does it mean?" gasped the bewildered inspector.

"It means that our man has slipped us again," returned the detective. "Three times, and now—he's gone!"

"How?"

"I noticed a window in the stern of the hold—a mere port-hole. He found himself locked in, overheard our plans, saw us leave the boat, resolved on a desperate exploit, reached through the window, cut the rope—puff! The wind and the waves did the rest. See! look steady! There's the boat floating out to sea."

"The last of convict 407," murmured the watchman.

"In the teeth of a storm, and he locked in!" muttered the inspector.

He lifted his voice to call after the watchman. In a minute or two that individual came running, wonderingly, back to the beach.

A few words explained the situation.

"There's a rowing-boat in the canal. Shall I get it?" he asked.

"Yes—yes; we must overtake him," assented the inspector sharply.

"If we can keep the boat in sight," supplemented the detective, peering keenly seaward. "It's out of view."

"What's that?" interrupted his companion, seizing his arm suddenly.

"What?" queried the detective.

"Look!"

Mr. Inspector pointed across the dark expanse of waters.

"Ah! a light," spoke Dean.

"No, a fire. See the flames! Dean, it's the raft!"

The imperturbable assistant started for the first time. A look akin to horror came into his face. He shivered as a mere point of light grew to a waving flame, and this, forking out, sent upwards a score of seething swords of fire.

"It is the boat," he muttered. "The cigar—the lighted cigar—Good God! I carelessly threw it on the deck. It fell among the shavings. The wind fanned it. The man on that craft is doomed unless we reach and rescue him. Rouse yourself, Grey. It is no longer a criminal we are after, but a beleaguered human being in deadly peril."

In feverish suspense the inspector stood glaring at the burning craft. The detective paced the sands like a caged lion. He fairly ran into the water as the watchman rounded the canal outlet and rowed along the beach.

He sprang in and took up the oars, running the yawl to where the inspector stood.

"Jump aboard!" he ordered sharply.

"I'm afraid we're too late."

"We can only try. The boat is drifting south. It cannot be more than half a mile out."

The watchman at the stern, the inspector at the bow, the detective made the little craft fairly leap through the white-crested waves on the errand of rescue.

They neared the burning boat.

Of a sudden the blazing flaring mass gave a great hissing splutter.

Its stern sank, then it rocked, the waves lapped the thwarts, submerged them, and then—a gaunt, blackened skeleton—the charred wreck sank in an eddying vortex.

"The last of convict 407," murmured the watchman, in horror-stricken accents.

"The reward lost," said Mr. Inspector.

"The Burgoyne mystery a mystery still. What will Richard Sheldon say now?" purred the detective softly.

The wind came up in stronger gusts, a pall fell over the waters, and amid gruesome mists and sudden gloom, Robert Lane, convict No. 407, seemed to have been swallowed up in the jaws of the blackest night that ever hung above the earth.

(To be continued.)

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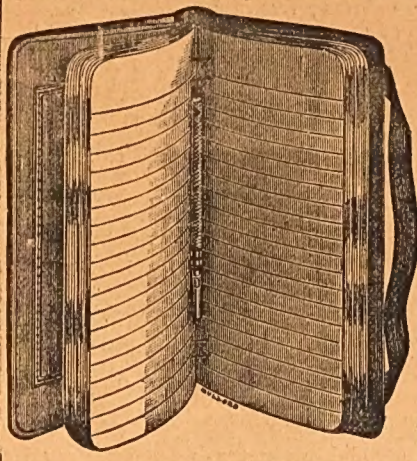

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A VERY FOOLISH YOUNG MAN.

Hundreds of years ago, a young man belonging to a rich and powerful family turned his back upon his father's castle and went to live in a thick forest. A few friends went with him. They built a house for themselves and resolved to live what they considered a holy life. Their leader set an example of austerity. He lashed himself with whips; he wore the coarsest clothing; he slept on a bare plank. What he ate was scarcely sufficient to keep him alive, and so wretched in quality that even the dogs turned from it. Of course the young man had indigestion and dyspepsia. He persevered in abusing his stomach until his sense of taste was destroyed. He would swallow chalk or fruit rinds as readily as you who read this would eat Yorkshire pudding. This suicidal conduct was generally admired, and his neighbours looked upon him as a saint.

"I always had a bad taste in my mouth," says a gentleman who lives not far from Manchester. "It was worst in the morning, and I could not enjoy anything I ate, because all my food tasted bad."

Consider for a moment how useful is the sense of taste. It warns us when anything unwholesome enters the mouth, for the rule is that whatever is offensive to the taste is injurious to the body. The rule has exceptions, and the reverse does not always hold good, because harmless medicines are not always pleasant to swallow. Like the self-denying hero of the middle ages, Mr. Alfred Ogden suffered from the effects of an incompetent stomach, and one of these effects was the bad taste he tells us of. The trouble began in the spring of 1892, and one of the first signs that something was wrong was a feeling of dulness and languor. Our correspondent says he felt tired after the least exertion. When he had managed to swallow some food, despite the bad taste, he felt as if a dagger had pierced his breast, and gone right back to the shoulder blades. It was with great difficulty that he could attend to his business.

At night, weary and worn out with pain, Mr. Ogden tried in vain to sleep. The demon of dyspepsia haunted him and gave him no rest. He took medicines, and at times he felt a little relief.

"I continued in this state for twelve months," he writes. In April, 1893, I read one day, in a little book left at my house, of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. Mr. Catterall, the chemist, of Church Street, sold me a bottle; and a few doses relieved me greatly. Two more bottles completed the cure, and now I am perfectly healthy; and have been ever since. My wife, who suffered from a sluggish liver a long time, has derived great benefit from Mother Seigel's Syrup. Yours truly (Signed), Alfred Ogden, 4, College Croft, Eccles, near Manchester, January 26th, 1894."

The man we have told you of, who went to live the life of a hermit in the woods, lost his taste because he outraged his palate. He ate things never intended for human food. He was rightly served for a fanatic and a fool.

The bad taste of which Mr. Ogden speaks, however, was that of bile coming up into his throat and mouth from his deranged stomach; where bile is never found except in cases in which it gets out of its proper place—namely, in the bowels. We must remember that in indigestion the stomach does very little of its natural work. Instead of dissolving and separating the food, turning part of it into good blood and expelling the rest from the body, the stomach merely retains it as any other bag or receptacle would do. Then, through the action of the heat and moisture the food ferments, turns sour, rots, and throws off gases and acids, some of which now and then arise into the mouth, causing the bad taste and the "wind" so often experienced by the sufferer.

These, and other symptoms, can only be gotten rid of by renewing the action of the stomach, which is accomplished by Mother Seigel's Syrup, as in Mr. Ogden's case. So that whenever you feel any of these signs, you will know what they mean, and what to do to cure them.

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